

INDYPENDENT

Landlords Discover Life on the Dole

By HEATHER HADDON

With a face hardened by struggle, Rosaura Robles stares out of the window of the northwest Bronx apartment she can't call home. The mother of five was placed in the apartment as part of the "scatter-site" program—a temporary "fix" to the city's exploding shelter system that, before placing the homeless in more permanent dwellings, pays top-dollar for private rooms.

When she first moved into the cramped one-bedroom, which only had bunk beds, Robles slept on the floor. She was eight months pregnant at the time. While her social worker helped Robles get a couch (landlords are supposed to provide basic furniture in the program), her unit in the 2234 Davidson St. building remains decrepit. Her walls are covered with an overpoweringly foul-smelling mildew from perpetually leaking pipes.

Yet this substandard shelter didn't come cheap. In the six months of putting up Robles and her family, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelled out more than \$18,000 to Buchanan Realty, despite the fact that the building has racked up over 300 housing code violations.

Before placing homeless families in an apartment, DHS is required to make sure the unit is cleared of housing code violations. The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), another city agency, has a publicly available website that lists housing code violations for every building in the city. DHS also claims to conduct periodic visits to ensure standards. But tenants say this doesn't happen and that there is little if any communication between the two agencies. "The Homeless Services Department and HPD don't talk to each other," said Yvette Smith, who was placed in the building through the scatter-site program.

According to Barbara Flynn, chief of staff for HPD, 2234 Davidson Ave. is currently under review by her agency's "anti-abandonment unit"—the last stage for a problem building with an uncooperative landlord before HPD brings legal action. "[DHS] doesn't tell us what buildings they are going into beforehand," Flynn said. "If they were to say, 'What do you think of this building?' we would tell them."

Working with the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, tenant

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WARHEADS ON THE LOOSE

SPECIAL NUCLEAR
ISSUES SECTION
PAGES 10-15

By IMC STAFF

From rusting weapons factories to a Baghdad brewery to the bedrooms of Saddam's gilded palaces, United Nations weapons inspectors have searched without success for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. As we go to press, the Bush administration is set to push ahead with escalated war on Iraq, despite overwhelming international opposition and growing resistance at home.

The strange spectacle being played out in Baghdad comes at a moment when the nuclear genie is in fact slipping out of the bottle once again. However, the world's most dangerous warheads—Bush, Cheney, Powell, Rice, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz—won't be found under Saddam's bedcovers.

These individuals are heavily armed and on the loose with more than 10,000 strategic and tactical nuclear weapons at their command. They believe their arsenal is divinely ordained (page 14), want to extend their power to the heavens (page 14) and will only sign arms control treaties (page 12) that don't require them to give up a single weapon. On several occasions, they have explicitly stated that they may use their nukes preemptively against other "rogue nations."

Their offenses include the use of depleted uranium weapons in Afghanistan and Iraq; violations of the U.S. Constitution;

setting aside the U.S. legal system; scuttling the ABM treaty; trashing the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 against introducing weapons in space; conducting extra-judicial assassinations; organizing a coup; engaging in unprovoked aggression against sovereign nations, and violating virtually every convention on conduct during wartime.

Worse, the lawlessness of these nuclear desperados is fast becoming the international norm. Pakistan has adopted a U.S. first-nuclear-strike position against India. In turn, India has been threatening a White House-style pre-emptive war. Israel is on in the game, pummeling the Palestinians under its own nuclear umbrella. North Korea may already have nukes and Iran is racing to join the club before its regime changes.

Yet, following the example set by nuclear resisters like Philip Berrigan (page 11), civilian weapons inspectors (page 10) around the world are challenging the right of any government to control nuclear weapons and to threaten the ultimate form of terrorism: nuclear war.

Decisions being made by our current rulers may well make the world much more dangerous for decades to come. The rise of a passionate, life-affirming peace movement is the best hope for halting the war in Iraq and braking the descent into nuclear chaos. Regime change starts at home.



Illustration by Alicia Kubista



INSANITY

Government expands special registration process to 18 immigrant countries...pg 6

JOE STRUMMER

Remembering a legendary musician...pg 9

IRAQ JOURNAL

On the ground reports from Basra and Baghdad...pg 18



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What is the IMC?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the three-year-old Independent Media Center has become an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues impacting individuals, communities and eco-systems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate.

Unlike corporate media, we espouse open dialogue, and the importance of placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The *Independent* is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions. All reporting is done by NYC IMC volunteers unless otherwise noted.

What can I do to get involved?
The IMC has an open door. You can write for the *Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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—compiled by Pandi Hopkins & John Tarleton

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at 120th

Harlem Tenants Council
1 W. 125th,
Suite 209

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House
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Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

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Second Wave
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AFRICAN-AMERICANS FIGHT FOR PEACE ABROAD, UNITY AT HOME

By NIKOLAS KOZLOFF

There is overwhelming opposition in Harlem to a potential war in Iraq. Nellie Bailey recently told an anti-war conference at Manhattan's New School. But Bailey, Executive Director of the Harlem Tenants Association, also noted that anti-war organizers face formidable challenges in the community.

Forming lasting alliances with whites could prove daunting, she said, due to the prominence of black nationalist sentiment. Another obstacle is the Democratic Party, which according to Bailey has often co-opted leadership in the African-American community. Additionally, Bailey said, many African-Americans are wary of the present political climate. "A lot of people are fearful about attending events and remark of organizers. 'Those people could be Communists'"

Bailey also remarked that patronizing white organizers sometimes alienate black residents. "These residents, who include tenant organizers and local civic leaders," said Bailey, "don't always have the power of words. On the other hand, white organizers must give respect to their capabilities."

Other black leaders argue that white organizers must concentrate on more bread-and-butter issues. At an October speak-out at St. Mary's Church, Jim

Haughton of Harlem Fight Back said, "Harlem is already feeling a depression, so simply trying to end the war is inadequate. We need to fight for affordable housing, education, health-care and environmental protections."

Other organizers are encouraged by recent political activity but warn of the political and cultural disconnect between whites and blacks. Lorenzo Komboha Ervin, author of *Anarchism and The Black Revolution*, says the global justice movement must now transform itself into an anti-war movement.

"When African-Americans saw whites at large protests against the IMF, a lot of them felt disconnected and asked, 'What are those crazy whites doing fighting in the streets?'" says Ervin.

Ervin suggests that blacks need not be amalgamated into the global justice movement or the incipient anti-war movement, but instead might form "an alternative tendency" or a separate caucus.

Ervin also notes that anarchists must do a better job at developing an anti-racist consciousness, and must support black movements tangibly by providing resources and political support. "Whites must not look upon the African-American community opportunistically but as political allies," he remarks. Ervin also recom-

mends that African-Americans challenge whites within political meetings and demand their own voice.

Judging from recent events, many organizers are thinking about ways to overcome the cultural and racial divide separating whites and blacks. At the New School, a predominantly white audience listened intently to Bailey speak about the "European ethnic chauvinism" of white progressives. And at the St Mary's Church speak-out, an audience of many blacks but also some whites turned

out to hear anti-war speakers, almost all of whom were people of color.

Where is all this organizing headed? Bailey does not deny that it will be difficult to shake people out of their lethargy. But, she says recent speak outs organized in Harlem have featured people of color, and have been drawing large numbers of people. "We've made progress," she says, "and our numbers have gotten larger. When you have 90 people at an event on a Friday, that's a good turnout."



A mother and daughter march with Black Voices for Peace, Washington DC, October 2002

Ever Burns

FOREIGN STUDENTS FEEL THE HEAT FROM FEDERAL DETAINMENTS

By PANDI HOPKINS

The City University of New York (CUNY) of old was like the ivy leagued campuses of the well-to-do—a safe haven. Both CUNY's two- and four-year colleges had abundant remedial classes to serve those whose academic background needed bolstering.

Older students with full-time jobs or families were welcome to earn their degrees through part-time study over an extended period of time. Moreover, the New York City Department of Welfare was willing to support college education, and immigrant students were welcome.

Fifteen years ago, it was CUNY policy to ask no further questions.

Stephanie Perez, a CUNY student from the Dominican Republic, says that now one feels threatened, looking over one's shoulder, never knowing who is watching.

Another student, from Guyana (of Middle East descent), explained his abrupt absence from class: his uncle had been a victim of one of the government sweeps in Brooklyn of Middle Eastern men.

The latest source for apprehension on campus is the Security Entry and Exit Registration System under which the Justice Department is requiring that all visa-holding male aliens from specified countries register with the department.

It affects a large number of CUNY students. During the first phase of national regis-

tration, between 1,000 and 2,500 persons in California, upon obediently presenting themselves for registration, were arrested.

Students from four Colorado colleges were detained and threatened with deportation for not carrying full course loads.

Bobby Kahn of the Coney Island Avenue Project reported that as many as 100,000 Pakistani immigrants (including legal residents) have left the country to avoid pursuit, prosecution or persecution.

base of information on all foreign students will be readily available.

A mandatory compliance date for new students has been set for Jan. 30.

Citing the Patriot Act, the FBI claims the right to receive personal information on foreign faculty and students from universities. The Center for Constitutional Rights warns a wide range of information can be obtained about students who are not suspected of any wrongdoing.

Immigrants certified by the Attorney General as "suspected terrorists" can be subjected to an indefinite period of detention with no opportunity for court challenge.

The United States Department of Education has taken the view that personal information cannot be obtained without a court order or subpoena, a position backed by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) who notified Attorney General John Ashcroft of their position in mid-December.

Meanwhile, the Coney Island Avenue Project has announced a program of free legal counseling. A protest letter signed by The National Lawyers Guild, the American Civil Liberties Union and others evokes memories of Nazi Germany: "Let them not look back on history and say we stood by and did nothing."



CUNY students protesting tuition hikes for immigrants

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THE INDEPENDENT
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Jan. 27 UN Protest

On Jan. 27, several New York peace groups including No Blood for Oil, the NYU Peace Coalition and Not In Our Name have planned various protests outside the United Nations beginning at 9 a.m. Chief UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix will be at the UN to present his initial report on Iraq. For more info visit <http://www.nblo.net>.

West Side Organizes Against Olympic Stadium

West Side community groups will have a chance Jan. 30 at 1 p.m. to tell City Council what they think of a proposed billion-dollar sports stadium over the rail yards between West 30th and 34th streets and 10th and 12th Avenues. Last November, New York was named U.S. nominee to bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Neighborhood activists fear the stadium is only one part of a larger plan to overrun their mixed-use low-rise neighborhood with skyscrapers and luxury apartment buildings. Clinton/Hell's Kitchen groups and elected officials are planning an organizing forum Jan. 22, followed by a Chelsea forum Jan. 23, to mobilize residents for the Jan. 30 hearing.

"Communities can be preserved, but only if city residents take the time to show up and work on it," said John Fisher of the Clinton Special District Coalition. For more information, see <http://www.hellsKitchen.net>.

OPP Explains ABCs of NYC

Community Boards, Business Improvement Districts and a bewildering array of city agencies and departments. Ever wonder how New York really works and how ordinary people can create real change from the bottom-up? On Jan. 23, Organizing for Popular Power New York City (OPP-NYC) will launch a series of monthly workshops at the Brecht Forum (122 W. 27th St., 10th Fl.) to bring together activists and grassroots community leaders to share knowledge and experience.

Former Black Panther and City Councilman Charles Barron and Borough of Manhattan Community College political science professor Ron Hayduk will speak at the opening workshop. Subsequent workshops will be held Feb. 27 and March 27. For more information, call (917) 807-3877 or email opp_nyc@hotmail.com

NYC Holds First Social Forum

On January 11, over 400 people attended New York City's first-ever Social Forum. In solidarity with Brazil's World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, these New Yorkers gathered at the CUNY Graduate Center to discuss, debate and reflect on a range of social justice issues and ideas. Large opening and closing sessions focused on linking themes of the day and different groups addressing them in their work. The bulk of the day was devoted to a series of workshops highlighting common issues, bridging local and global, and skills needed to confront them.

TRANSIT WORKERS CONTRACT

A mixed bag of benefits and compromises

BY STEVE DOWNS

As several thousand transit workers and supporters marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to demand a decent contract on Dec. 16, word came that Roger Toussaint, President of Transport Workers Union (TWU) 100, was on TV announcing an agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) on a new contract. This seemed to be a fitting climax to several intense weeks during which Toussaint and Local 100 members were demonized in the press, threatened with massive fines and arrest, and deserted by the president of their national union—all because they would not renounce the possibility of a strike if they could not reach an acceptable agreement. (An article in the January issue of Labor Notes provides background and a report on events up to Dec. 7.)

However, as the terms of the agreement became known, the satisfaction felt by many transit workers gave way to disbelief at the contract their leaders were proposing they accept. The proposed contract calls for a wage freeze in the first year (cushioned by a \$1000 lump-sum payment "in recognition of substantial past productivity of the workforce"). The second and third year each have a 3 percent increase. Barely a week earlier, Toussaint had vowed that "hell would freeze over before Local 100 accepts zeroes!" The contract also calls for the union to agree to the consolidation of two distinct bus systems in the city and the

loss of protection against layoffs.

On the plus side, the disciplinary procedure is overhauled in ways that will likely produce a significant reduction in the amount of discipline transit workers face. Health benefits, which were threatened because the

Trust

domestic partners and part-time workers; a prescription plan for pre-Medicare retirees; a pilot childcare program and a "humanized" sick leave policy.

While President Toussaint predicted the agreement would pass easily, nine Executive Board members—including the Local's Recording-Secretary and VP for Rapid Transit—voted against it and have urged members to reject the contract and

send the negotiators back to the bargaining table. They have been joined by a large number of low-level officers and stewards. For its part, the Local leadership has hired a Public Relations consultant and has mounted an aggressive pro-ratification campaign.

Differences over the contract revolve around whether one thinks the positive elements outweigh the negative and whether one thinks the union could have done better if it had taken its own rhetoric about a strike seriously and made it clear that it was, in fact, ready to strike. Fuel was added to this latter debate when Basil Paterson, an adviser to the union, remarked, "The MTA always believed Roger was serious—but never serious about a strike." (NY Post, 12/17/02)

Local 100 members are voting in a mail ballot, with the ballots being counted on January 21. Although the contract is quite unpopular, clouds of uncertainty remain concerning its final fate.

Steve Downs is an Executive Board member, TWU 100.



was bankrupt, are preserved. However, where benefits used to be provided via a jointly administered trust, the MTA now has sole control over the provision of health benefits. And co-payments are increased.

New provisions in the proposal call for full health benefits to be provided for

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE USES FUZZY MATH

BY BENNETT BAUMER

Recently laid off from his job in one of New York's many clandestine garment factories, Alvaro Salvedra found part-time work in a restaurant. Having acquired valuable work experience in the garment industry, Salvedra sought to stay in it, applying at a national laundry company. Yet he—and many others like him—are not included in the unemployment rate.

"The unemployment rate does not calculate unemployment, it measures how many people are killing themselves to enter the job market," said Jonathan Rosen of the New York Unemployment Project.

Rosen and other critics charge that the Department of Labor's unemployment statistics are unreliable because the sample of people surveyed is too small and the margin of error too great. The calculations exclude anyone working at least one hour a week as well as discouraged workers, defined as those who looked for work for 12 months after losing their jobs. At the time of sampling these workers felt there were no jobs available to them and had quit looking.

Without work for weeks, Alvaro relied on his family to pay his share of rent and other costs. But his major economic hopes were dashed.

"My family was able to help me out when I did not have a job, because we all pay for the house together. But I personally could not send money to Mexico during this time," said Salvedra who wants to

return to Mexico in three years with enough money to start a business.

As workers like Salvedra have little or no governmental resources to support them during unemployment, other discouraged workers qualify for disability. According to the Department of Labor, 5.4 million Americans receive disability pay. A recent increase in recipients made disability the country's most expensive and

expensive welfare program. Together, disability recipients and informal sector workers constitute a large reduction of the country's unemployment rate, which recently rose to 6 percent. New York City's rate also rose, to 8 percent.

There is some good news. In January, Congress extended unemployment an extra 13 weeks for those whose benefits ran out at the end of the year. And the booming market of the '90s did leave some positive effects, such as women moving into the job market at an all-time high, bolstered by affirmative action policies. But African-Americans and Latinos bear the brunt of economic woes, with the unemployment rates for both ethnic

groups significantly higher than for whites.

With the nation preparing for war in the Persian Gulf, the government is proposing cuts on taxes and social spending. This combination does not bode well for people in the informal sector and those receiving disability, the uncounted among the unemployed.



ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT:

NYC Cop Suspended for Refusing to Arrest Homeless Man

BY DIANA WURN

When Officer Eduardo Delacruz refused his supervisor's order to arrest a homeless man in late November, as per NYPD policy, he wasn't looking at the people under their blankets as an inevitable blight upon the urban landscape. Instead, he saw them as people who needed help and in turn he acted with compassion and a sense of justice. At the NYPD, this is grounds for insubordination.

The Nov 22 incident resulted in 30 days of suspension and over \$3000 in lost wages. Officer Delacruz has been reassigned to a transit post in Brooklyn, according to his lawyer. The New York Post called for Delacruz's resignation, warning that "chaos" will result if officers think for themselves.

Yet the benevolent act resonated with many people, including the homeless. Through Housing Works, an AIDS services organization, homeless New Yorkers raised \$3000 for the officer and presented a check to his family at Christmas.

More than 37,000 people struggle to locate a place to sleep each night in the city. "Jose" is one of them. He stands at the corner of Carmine and Bleeker Street in Manhattan every morning holding a sign that says: "I am homeless. God Bless." He has kind eyes and holds out a dirt brown "I love NY" paper cup. He wears a couple of coats and a gym bag over his back with his hands through the straps, with one hand on a cane.

Jose understands why many homeless do not use the shelters. "[Shelters are] horrible," he said. "If you are a woman in a shelter you could get raped. If you have kids, you're better to stay on the street."

The shelters are also difficult to access. When I called information to locate a shelter for myself, I was directed to the New York City Department of Homeless Services. An automated hotline informed me that I must go to one of three shelters since I was an adult woman without children: one in the Bronx involving a subway trip and a bus ride, another in Jamaica, Queens or a third in

Brooklyn's East New York—none of which sounded like safe locations.

I then tried the Red Cross, which advised me to first appear for a city intake. I was informed that I would need two pieces of identification and that I would be fingerprinted. Phone numbers of the shelters are unavailable due to "security reasons" so I could not call for information about how long it would take or if there was room.

Clients often must wait 10-12 hours at an intake location before being transferred to a shelter. This results in only a few hours of sleep before they're out again. If a person is trying to hold onto a job or has a mental illness, the intake process could exacerbate their situation. The Department of Veteran's Affairs estimates 45 percent of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and 50 percent have a substance abuse problem.

"The problem is the intake shelters are some of the worst-run places.... The city mismanages it so badly that there is a bottleneck," said Patrick Markee, Senior

Policy Analyst for the Coalition for the Homeless, the organization responsible for the landmark State Supreme Court ruling 20 years ago that ordered New York City and state to provide emergency shelter for the homeless.

Officer Delacruz's action took place two days after the city's commissioner of Homeless Services used the mayor's private plane to take a trip to the Bahamas. According to the Associated Press, Commissioner Linda Gibbs took the trip to research cruise ships in order to determine if it would be feasible to convert them into shelters in New York.

While the city considers jails and cruise ships as solutions, the New York Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit to address the constitutionality of the NYPD's policy of arrests. "The situation at the shelters could easily be improved, but the city is focused on a 'bed of nails' philosophy," said Markee, "It can be seen as an attempt to deter the homeless, to make it as hard as possible for people."

Landlords.....continued from cover

activists are beginning to organize to draw attention to the scatter-site program's failures. Earlier in January, a group of East New York tenants filed a lawsuit against their landlord, charging him with wrongful eviction of some 125 permanent residents to cash in on the scatter-site program's generous subsidies.

"If [the landlords] are getting money from the city for us, we should be getting something for the building," said Marta Cruz, a long-time tenant who is working on a multi-building organizing campaign with the Coalition.

Program started in 1983

The city's scatter-site program—officially known as the Emergency Assistance Rehousing Program (EARP)—began in 1983. EARP paid stipends and bonuses to private and non-profit landlords to house homeless families in hotels and apartment buildings. Ineffective for its first 10 years, EARP only grew when landlords received, in addition to the bonuses, federal Section 8 subsidies for low-income housing. In 1994, a peak of 3,072 homeless families were placed in private housing according to a report issued by the Citizens Housing and Planning Council, a city public interest organization.

Scatter-site has become the principal method of housing the homeless outside

the city's overflowing shelter system. Homeless people placed in private housing jumped from less than 5 to over 40 percent between 1989 and 1997. As of February, DHS paid about 60 private entities to house the homeless. Scatter-site management companies account for 16.

There are 14 scatter-site properties in the northwest Bronx, and according to residents, the proportion of scatter-site tenants has been increasing rapidly. Willia McKeiver, a resident of 1920 Walton Ave. for 24 years, remembers there were 12 scatter-site tenants in her building last year. Now, over a quarter of the 80-unit building is devoted to EARP.

Doing the math explains why. A one-time bonus received by landlords to house a family starts at \$2,000 and caps off at \$10,000 (for eight). Landlords also receive roughly \$95 a day per family. To date, Buchanan Realty, the management company for 2234 Davidson, has made an estimated \$25,000 from the Robles family.

Though a weathered "apartments available" sign is still tacked to 2234 Davidson Ave., permanent residents are far less profitable than the 10 EARP tenants there. For instance, Buchanan Realty has received only half as much from permanent resident Anthony Holmes and his

wife in their two years of occupying their apartment than it has from Robles in only six months.

"The landlords have found a cash cow," McKeiver said. "Most [landlords] in the area have found it...and it's too hard for them to look away."

A dangerous environment

Tenants, organizers and housing experts say the way scatter-site has been implemented is a recipe for destabilizing buildings and neighborhoods. A main concern is that landlords have been filling vacant apartments exclusively with EARP placements. "Increasing the density of homeless families to unsupportive levels becomes a dangerous environment to those living there before," according to Frank Barconi of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council.

This is especially true if temporary residents are not getting the services they need from the program. Landlords are contractually obligated to provide support services like help with finding permanent housing. Too often that support is poor or non-existent, organizers say. "The quality of support services [the homeless] are getting has always been an issue," Barconi said.

Tenants say all this makes for strained relationships within already difficult

buildings. "The pushing of [scatter-site tenants] into buildings is making residents angry with each other," McKeiver said. "It's not good for the community."

Lead paint and rats

Yvette Smith will tell you there's a lot at stake. Down the rickety stairs at 2234 Davidson Ave., and past the mailboxes, which no longer lock or receive mail, Yvette Smith lives with her four children. About a year ago, she accepted the EARP placement when her daughter got asthma after a three-week stint at the Emergency Assistance Unit. While an improvement, she remains unsatisfied. When Smith moved into her first EARP placement in the building, she discovered that the apartment had dangerous levels of lead paint.

Now in a second apartment, there are still problems. "My cats are scared of the rats," said Smith. She is even more fearful of the building's environment where, according to many tenants, drugs and burglary are on the rise. Smith has her brother stay there during the day and, she said, "I keep the phone near the bed."

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NATIONAL

PROTESTING THE WAR AT HOME AND ABROAD

BY MIKE BURKE

Hundreds of thousands of anti-war demonstrators took to the streets across the globe over the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend in mid-January to protest the possibility of war in Iraq and the Bush administration's domestic policies.

In Washington and San Francisco, organizers claimed up to 500,000 and 200,000 respectively took part in day-long protests. Scores of other anti-war events took place from Antarctica to Tokyo to London to Moscow.

"George Bush has woken up a sleeping giant," said U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA). "And we come together today [to honor King's vision] for eliminating the real axis of evil -- poverty, racism and war."

In Washington, former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark called for the impeachment of President Bush.

"What George Bush is doing now is usurping the power of the Constitution and the people, being above the law. Treating anybody any way he wants to -- no civil rights, no civil liberties, nothing... Has George Bush committed impeachable offenses?... The answer is a resounding yes."

The protest marked the latest sign of growing opposition to a U.S.-led attack on Iraq. President Bush's approval rating has dipped to 53 percent, his lowest since before 9/11.

Despite the growing resistance, the Bush-Cheney junta has continued in the opening weeks of 2003 to push forward its war abroad and at home:

Jan. 18: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says the



U.S. can't wait the 10th months that the weapons inspectors say they need to adequately do their job. A decision on going to war will be made "in a matter of weeks, not in months or years," Rumsfeld says.

Jan. 17: White House officials admit it plans to lease 9 million acres of Alaska's North Slope to oil and gas companies. Environmentalists say it would be the biggest sell-off in the history of the American Arctic.

Jan. 15: On Martin Luther King's birthday, Bush announces the White House would urge the Supreme Court to rule the University of Michigan's affirmative action unconstitutional.

Jan. 12: Rumsfeld signs the latest deployment order overnight, sending 27,000 troops. Two days earlier Rumsfeld dispatched 35,000. By early February 150,000 troops will be near Iraq. ABC News reports as many as 350,000 will eventually be sent.

Jan. 8: Attorney General John Ashcroft hails a Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling backing the administration's

"enemy combatant" policy. The courts said the government can indefinitely hold U.S. citizens captured overseas without ever filing charges or presenting evidence of guilt. Citizens can also be barred from filing appeals and from seeing an attorney.

Jan. 7: Bush renominates cross-burning sympathizer Charles Pickering to federal judgeship. He left the Democratic Party to join the Republicans in 1964 in protest the Democrats' support for

civil rights. As a state judge Pickering once excused as a drunken act the burning of an eight-foot cross on the lawn of an interracial couple in Mississippi.

Jan. 6: Bush proposes a \$674 billion "economic stimulus" package that many economists say will help stimulate the nation's growing wealth gap but not the overall economy. The rich stand to save billions from the elimination of dividend taxes. VP Cheney alone would save \$100,000. Meanwhile the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that some low-income families would actually lose money under the so-called stimulus plan.

Jan. 6: The New York Times reports that the White House is drafting plans for a military occupation of Iraq following the expected ouster of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Under the plan the U.S. would take over Iraqi oil fields for up to 18 months, appoint a viceroy to run the government and try senior Iraqi officials in military tribunals. The Times headlined their front-page article "U.S. Is Completing Plan to Promote a Democratic Iraq."

HOMELAND INSECURITY: INS STEPS UP REGISTRATIONS & ROUND-UPS

BY ERIC SCHWARTZ

On Jan. 10, thousands of men from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Eritrea, Lebanon, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen stood in line at INS offices across the country to be fingerprinted, and interrogated. The INS's "Special Registration Program" targets almost all males sixteen or over from 18 predominantly Muslim nations who lack permanent resident or refugee status. The list increased Jan. 16 when the INS added Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan and Kuwait.

Bobby Khan, of the New York-based Coney Island Avenue Project, calls the targeting of Muslim immigrants "the worst form of racial profiling... a new wave of harassment and fear to the immigrant community."

The Jan. 10 registration was greeted by pickets and protests at INS offices around the country including the agency's Downtown Manhattan office. More of the same is likely on Feb. 21 when Saudi and Pakistani men will be required to register at INS offices. Pakistanis are the largest Muslim immigrant community in New York City and many of them are expressing fear and uncertainty about the INS plan.

Based on recent events, the Feb. 21 turnout is expected to be light, but those who do show up at INS offices may find themselves subject to imprisonment and deportation. There were 125 arrests nationwide of men who registered in January, according to the INS. Many of the men were simply waiting for their applications for permanent residence to



Protester at the INS registration, January 10, 2002

freezing cells. Some immigrants were hosed down with cold water or kicked by guards. By the end of the day, the INS had arrested a quarter of those who registered in Los Angeles, and made some arrests in other cities. A 3,000-strong rally by the city's large Iranian community helped force the INS to release many of the detainees, but the INS is still trying to deport others.

Criminalizing Immigrants

Saurav Sarkar, of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF), points out that the registration program "creates a new class of deportable people." Anyone who fails to register may be arrested or deported under the new rules. The rules also affect future visitors from the countries on Ashcroft's list. In fact, any foreign visitor can be forced to register if an INS inspector says so. Once they register, visitors and immigrants must report back after 30 days, every time they leave the country and any time they change their address or school.

Homeland Insecurity

The registration program, initiated by Attorney General John Ashcroft, continues the mass arrests and deportations unleashed by the "war on terrorism." Soon immigrant communities will face another challenge: the

Department of Homeland Security.

In the biggest restructuring of the federal government in 50 years, the Department of Homeland Security will throw together 170,000 employees from 22 different government agencies. The INS will be split into the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, responsible for services, and the Bureau of Border Security,

charged with enforcement.

Katherine Newell Bierman, of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC), argues that "in an organization whose first mission is Homeland Security, immigration services automatically takes a back seat." A NAPALC statement predicts that already long waits for services like green cards and work visas will increase.

Other advocates predict an increase in abuses from a more pumped-up, less accountable incarnation of the current INS. Esperanza Chacon, from the Mexican group Asociacion Tepeyac in New York, says that "they're judging everyone as if they were a terrorist."

Continued Crisis

According to Sarkar, "what we're seeing is the continuing escalation of anti-immigrant policy that began in earnest with the 1996 laws, accelerated with 9/11, and continues today." In the three years after the 1996 laws passed, the number of people held in INS detention shot up 70 percent. After September 11, INS raids and detentions heated up even more.

And they haven't stopped. Bobby Khan reports that the INS has targeted Muslim neighborhoods to look for people with immigration violations, in businesses, restaurants and apartments. At Desis Rising up and Moving (DRUM), a South Asian organizing group in Queens, calls keep rolling in from immigrants locked up in New Jersey county jails.

Sarkar explains that the ongoing government attacks are also "creating a climate that fosters attacks by individuals. As a result, there's been an increase in hate crimes and employment and housing discrimination."

FAITH BASED INITIATIVES

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

BY DON MONKERUD

Showing an impeccable sense of timing, President Bush chose Christmas to order all federal agencies to allow religious groups to compete for funding, breaking down the constitutional wall separating church and state. He presented it as a compassionate effort to more efficiently deliver government services to those in need. But a new study by the Texas Freedom Network casts "faith-based initiatives" in not quite so celestial a light.

The October 2002 report, "The Texas Faith-Based Initiative at Five Years," examines programs begun by Bush when he was governor of Texas.

In 1996, then-Governor Bush appointed a "task force" made up almost entirely of Christians to guide Texas in eliminating regulations that prevented faith-based providers from receiving government funds. He pushed agencies to open funding to faith-based groups by changing agency policies and contracts and eliminated licensing and inspection requirements for religious charities.

Bipartisan groups supported the legislative and regulatory changes to

cut through government red tape because Bush claimed that religious groups achieved worthy results. Texas became the first and most aggressive state in implementing taxpayer-funded religious services.

After five years of such experimentation, according to the report, Texas discovered:

—The Department of Criminal Justice used \$1.5 million to fund the Inner Change prison pre-release program, the purpose of which was to create respect for "God's law" and encourage "the spiritual and moral regeneration" of offenders. State funds paid for the program's Bible-based counseling and Christian-centric materials.

—The Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, which regulates childcare providers, children's homes and child-placement agencies, stopped licensing and overseeing faith-based childcare providers. Rates of confirmed abuse and neglect at the faith-based facilities were 25 times higher than at state-licensed facilities. Complaints at these facilities were 75 percent, compared to 5.4 percent at state-licensed facilities.

—One of Bush's highly touted models, Teen Challenge, a Christian-

based drug treatment program, racked up a list of violations 49 pages long, including no properly qualified counselors, no chemical dependency services, illegal handling of medications and failure to inform clients of their rights. Clients were supposed to pray to get well.

—Another program, Jobs Partnership, illegally spent \$8,000 on bibles, and courts found that evangelical Christianity permeated the job training.

The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization was given \$1.5 million for a faith-based teaching structure that incorporated a religious mission that required a "total surrender to Christ."

The faith-based initiative became a vehicle for fringe religious providers to avoid legitimate state oversight, and led to the abuse and neglect of people in the programs. The program created so many problems that in 2001 the Texas legislature chose not to renew the state's accreditation program for faith-based childcare providers. With such a track record in Texas, it seems best not to put any faith in the success of Bush's national initiative.

BUSH PRESCRIBES BITTER MEDICINE FOR SENIORS

BY ERIC LAURSEN

Gov. George Pataki is threatening to make 2003 a grim year for New York's elderly poor by refusing to promise that Medicaid won't face cutbacks if he can't squeeze more assistance out of the federal government. Now, the state's 2.4 million elderly—and those who will follow them into retirement over the next decade—may face the biggest shakeup in health care coverage since Lyndon Johnson introduced Medicare over 35 years ago.

President Bush and his advisors see spiraling prescription drug costs as an opportunity. In exchange for new Medicare prescription benefits, the White House will likely demand that Medicare be open to competition from insurance companies, HMOs and other private providers.

Backed by a Republican Congress, Bush plans to offer sweeping proposals to restructure Medicare in his State of the Union address on Jan. 28. Administration officials recently indicated that they are considering two options: either adding a drug program and other new benefits in exchange for higher Medicare premiums, or giving seniors the choice to leave the program for one of a menu of private plans.

Washington is betting that Bush will take the second track. But critics—including church groups, liberal policy think-tanks and senior advocates—are determined to fight any proposal that smacks of privatization, which they say could drive costs up for retirees, push

low-income households into accepting inferior coverage and eventually end Medicare as a collective social insurance program.

If Bush decides to allow recipients to opt out of Medicare, he will argue that private plans can supply care more cheaply and efficiently. But the evidence points in the opposite direction. While Medicare costs are growing rapidly, private health care costs are shooting even higher. Edith Rasell, minister of labor relations and community economic development at the United Church of Christ, notes that while health care spending rose 8.7 percent in 2001, Medicare costs rose only 7.8 percent, even though Medicare's recipient population was growing faster.

Why? "Medicare is more efficient than private insurance," Rasell says. "It has no marketing costs, no big CEO salaries, and it doesn't sell 16 different policies with 18 different conditions. It's much more straightforward."

But the healthier and wealthier seniors who make up some 20 percent of Medicare's recipient population might find private providers that can offer them lower prices plus a bigger package of benefits and still make a profit. If they opt out of Medicare, leaving it with a pool of poorer and sicker recipients, the program may find itself in a real cost spiral. Eventually, free-market ideologues could use this as a rationale for ending Medicare as we know it and throwing the remaining recipients onto the private market if any providers will have them.

Cheney Scuttles Life-Saving Drug Deal

During Geneva WTO talks in December, Vice President Dick Cheney blocked a deal that would have relaxed the global patent law, providing cheap life-saving drugs to poorer developing countries. The pharmaceutical industry contends that the billions a year spent on research will disappear once pirated drugs are sold at discounted prices, but others argue that the drugs would only be sold to countries that needed the discount. "George Bush is arguing that [treatments for] diseases his own children receive treatment for are off-limits to poor children in poor countries," said Jamie Love, director of the Consumer Project on Technology, a US lobbying group.

Share Your Vacation Plans with Uncle Sam

Later this year, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) may require all U.S. citizens to check in and out of the country by providing their itinerary. The new rule proposed by the INS would apply to passengers and crew on all commercial airlines, cruise ships and cargo flights and vessels, with the exception of most ferries, according to a Jan 14 news report in the *Toronto Star*. Commercial buses and trains, as well as private transportation, would not be affected. Deputy Prime Minister John Manley has reported that such restrictions would clog the U.S.-Canadian border. "It would turn cities like Detroit into a parking lot," he said.

NE States Say Bush's Clean Air Plan Stinks

Nine northeastern states ranging from Maine to Maryland recently filed suit in federal court challenging the Bush administration's decision to ease national industrial pollution restrictions for the first time since enactment of the Clean Air Act in 1970.

The filing occurred as the Environmental Protection Agency formally issued final revisions to the New Source Review clean air enforcement rules that would likely prevent future government legal action in all but the most flagrant cases of pollution. Under the new rules, refineries, manufacturers and some utilities will be presented with new ground rules for upgrading or expanding their plants without the threat of lawsuits and without having to add costly antipollution equipment required by law to control smog, acid rain and soot. During the Clinton Administration, federal and state authorities used New Source Review to sue more than 50 power plants in 12 states.

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No News is Good News

On Christmas Eve the Bush Administration quietly killed off the Labor Department's report on the number of mass layoffs each month. The program gave money to the states to collect data on companies laying off more than 50 people at once. A paragraph buried in a longer report released Christmas Eve stated the program had run out of funding. The program cost \$6.6 million dollars a year out of a Labor Department budget of \$44 billion dollars. State officials, who rely on the report to help steer unemployed people to jobs in growing or stable industries, were surprised and critical of the decision to shut down an important indicator of the nation's economy.

GE Striker Dies on Picket Line

A recent strike against GE was marred by tragedy as Keston "Michelle" Rodgers, 40, was hit and killed by a police car while on the line in Hollow Creek, KY, near Louisville.

Nearly 20,000 U.S. workers struck on Jan. 14 to protest GE's abrupt increase in employees' health care costs. "GE is making so much money—a projected \$16 billion this year. It doesn't need to do this," Carmen Di Paolo told Albany's WGY news.

The two-day walkout, affecting 48 locations in 23 states, was the first major strike against GE since 1969.

Roy Truax, chief of the local two-person force, was driving the car.

"It's very devastating," said IUE/CWA Local 761 President Randy Payton. "She was killed doing what she believed in."

Thomas Kean's Osama Connection

Former New Jersey governor Thomas Kean, chosen by President Bush to head the 9/11 Commission, has been selected because he was reportedly "close to the families of the 9/11 victims." What hasn't been widely reported is how close he is to the family of Osama bin Laden. Kean, it turns out, is a director of Amerada Hess Corporation, which is involved in the Hess-Delta joint venture with Delta Oil of Saudi Arabia. Khalid bin Mahfouz, whose family owns part of Delta Oil, is Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law.

Code Pink Issues Peace Alert

Code Pink is a non-stop women's peace vigil in the shadow of the White House that will culminate with a peace rally March 8 to celebrate International Women's Day. To learn more, see <http://www.codepink4peace.org>.

SmallPox Vaccine Plan Rejected

BY CATRIONA STEWART

Amid a barrage of criticism from health experts, the Bush administration decided in December to reject plans for a population-wide smallpox vaccination, opting instead to offer the controversial vaccine to some 500,000 "first responders," including healthcare workers and other personnel critical in a bio-terror emergency.

This revised plan, however, still leaves many hospitals and healthcare professionals feeling uneasy. Declared one of the most dangerous vaccines available today by Dr. Anthony Fauci, current director of the National Institutes of Health, the smallpox vaccination introduces a living form of the virus *Vaccinia* into the bloodstream, generating a range of side effects from an itchy rash to smallpox-type pustules.

Before vaccinations were discontinued in the 1970s, about a thousand of every one million people vaccinated experienced serious reactions, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). However, demographic changes since then will likely alter these statistics. For the more than one in six Americans who are either pregnant, have a history of eczema and other skin disorders or have suppressed immune systems due to cancer, transplant treatments or HIV, contact with the *Vaccinia* virus could be deadly.

While the Bush plan has provided ample financial and legal protections for vaccine manufacturers against potential fallout from mass vaccinations, including immunity from liability, the protection given to healthcare workers and their patients is minimal. In a scathing statement, Andrew L. Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the nation's largest healthcare organization, criticized Congress and the administration for "protect[ing] the wealth of the drug companies who produce the vaccine but not the health of hospital workers and the public."

Although the plan does mandate a screening process for first responders

who have agreed to be vaccinated, it currently lacks provisions for free and confidential testing for immuno-suppressant disorders prior to receiving the vaccine. The plan also fails to provide compensation for the estimated 30 percent of workers who will feel too sick to work after being vaccinated, or for any who are permanently injured by the vaccine.

According to Bill Sardi, President of Knowledge of Health, Inc., these relatively simple provisions could have a great impact. "Health care workers need to take 3 weeks off work until the vaccination site heals, or face infection to their patients who are often immune-compromised themselves. No provision has been made for this. Health care workers could spread *Vaccinia* (cowpox) to the rest of the population and hospitals may face lawsuits for exposing vulnerable patients to this potential hazard."

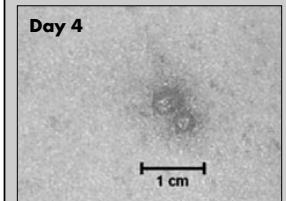
Under the specter of budget cuts to fund "homeland security," hospitals are reassessing the risks and benefits of inoculating their workers, and some have already opted not to offer their employees the vaccine. "Since there are no smallpox cases presently, and only risk for side effects, the risk/benefit ratio is 'all risk and no benefit,'" Mr. Sardi said.

Sardi is hardly alone in this opinion. Dr. Meryl Nass, a medical doctor and member of the board of the Alliance for Human Research Protection, points out that the three possible vaccines still awaiting FDA approval have undergone relatively limited testing, and as such there is no way to know how these drugs will react with today's more immune-suppressed population.

According to a Supreme Court decision of the early 1900s, individuals cannot be forced to take any vaccine, and with this knowledge many healthcare professionals are rejecting the Administration's hasty plans. As one public health worker from Staten Island said, "These diseases are all out there. You wash your hands, you know the symptoms, and you're treated if there is something there. The vaccines are only a false protection."

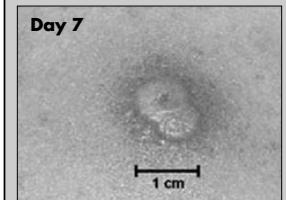
SMALLPOX VACCINATION SITE REACTION

Day 4



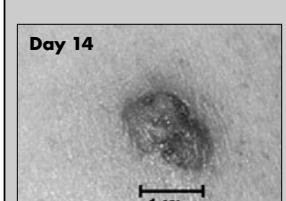
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Day 7



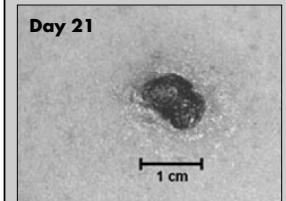
1 cm

Day 14



1 cm

Day 21



1 cm

Major (primary) reaction – Expected vaccine site reaction and progression following primary smallpox vaccination or revaccination after a prolonged period between vaccinations. Source: CDC

THE CLIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

Recent Report Warns of Rapid Climate Change

BY MIKE WU

In its only move to curb greenhouse gas emissions to date, the Bush administration has called for a whopping 1.5 mpg increase in fuel economy for SUVs and light trucks by 2007. According to a report released last year by the National Academy of Sciences, by 2007 we may soon need those SUVs to head for the hills.

The report, titled "Abrupt Climate Change: Inevitable Surprises," warns that instead of taking thousands of years to shift from an ice age to a warm era, the earth switches quickly from one "regime" to the other—in some cases, in less than ten years. Tree rings, ice core evidence and sedimentary records reveal large, widespread abrupt climate change over the last 100,000 years and beyond.

Scientists call the most recent and most studied example of this the Younger Dryas Event. As the earth came out of its last major ice age about 12,800 years ago, a cooling trend began and the earth went into a mini-ice age. But about 11,600 years ago the earth suddenly switched to a warmer "regime," with the earth's annual mean temperature jumping 14 degrees in just ten years, and the annual precipitation doubling in just three years. Events like this have occurred more than 24 times in the last 110,000 years.

No one can say with any exact certainty what triggers these abrupt changes. However, in a chapter of the report titled "Global Warming as a Possible Trigger for Abrupt Climate Change," the authors conclude that "human activities could trigger abrupt climate change." What this could mean for human societies is unknown

given that most reports on climate change impact embrace the scenario of gradual change.

The authors point out, "There is no plan for improving our understanding of the issue, no research priorities have been identified and no policy-making body is addressing the many concerns raised by the potential for abrupt climate change."

What will happen in the event of a climate flip? Nightmare scenarios abound. Ocean currents could weaken or collapse, plunging the earth into a new ice age. Radically altered weather patterns could cause rainforests to dry up and burn. Centuries of drought could turn croplands into deserts. What is certain is that the poorer countries of the world will be the most vulnerable to any rapid and devastating changes.

LONDON STILL CALLING: Joe Strummer, 1952-2002

By STEVEN WISHNIA

I saw the Clash at their first New York City gig, at the old Palladium on 14th Street in February 1979. It was probably the best rock'n'roll show I've ever seen in my life. They were obviously nervous, representing British punk-rock in the city that produced the Ramones, the Dolls and the Velvet Underground, but in a way that made them uniquely up for the gig. As Joe Strummer was tuning his Telecaster, guitarist Mick Jones leaned into the mic and muttered, "Let's get on with it, Strummer." And then they blasted off with the blazing-octaves intro of "I'm So Bored With the U.S."

Yankee dollar wanna talk

To the dictators of the world

In fact it's giving orders

And they can't afford to miss a word

Strummer, the Clash's lead singer, died

Dec. 22 of heart failure, aged 50. He left an extensive legacy of music both furious and soulful, radical enough to make you want to overthrow the government and rocking enough to put on at the peak of a party. Ironically, for a band so political—with songs like "Career Opportunities," "Clampdown" and "Washington Bullets"—the Clash were the most commercially successful group to come out of British punk, and even won admission to the canon of "classic rock."

The son of a mid-level British diplo-

mat, Strummer (born John Mellors) formed the Clash in 1976 with Jones and bassist Paul Simonon. They recorded their first album the next year.

With chainsaw-guitar tunes like "White Riot" and "Garageland," The Clash was one of the classics of '77 punk, but it also revealed something more, with their cover of Junior Murvin's reggae hit "Police and Thieves." In an era when white rock fans dismissed anything remotely danceable as "disco," the Clash would fuse high-energy guitar anarchy with soul, funk, and reggae grooves—and bring enough of their own so it wasn't a slavish imitation or a racist ripoff. But the U.S. branch of CBS Records, their label, thought the album was too raw for the American market and refused to put it out for two years, until after it set a record for sales as an import.

They followed up with a string of three shining singles, including the epic "White Man in Hammersmith Palais." Over heavy guitars and a light, melodica-flavored riddim, Strummer expounded on his night at a London reggae show with a brilliant mix of naivete and blunt honesty, confronting his disappointment at finding Afro-British clubgoers quite apolitical, and castigating commercial punk and celebrity culture for "turning rebellion into money."

"London Calling," their third album,

broke them commercially in the U.S. in 1980, with the apocalyptic swing of the title track, the bass-heavy militance of "The Guns of Brixton" and a minor hit with the soul-flavored "Train in Vain." That success enabled them to stretch out as musicians; Sandinista, their next album, was a sprawling three-record set. It was highly self-indulgent, but contained some great cuts, including "The Magnificent Seven," a Brit-rap groove funky enough to get on WBLS-FM in 1981.

But their U.S. success backfired culturally, as they increasingly drew a conservative "rock" audience. (Their militant/military stance was a double-edged sword; despite the Clash's numerous anti-imperial songs, Gulf War I pilots played their 1982 hit "Rock the Casbah" on bombing runs over Baghdad.) At their legendary series of shows at Bond's in Times Square in 1981, they got Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five to open for them. The rappers left the stage within 10 minutes, battered by a hail of bottles and "get off the stage, you fucking niggers" catcalls. "We're from the South Bronx and we've played some rough places," Flash announced, "but we've never had anything like this."

By 1982, the Clash were weary and close to breaking up, even as the "Combat Rock" album became their biggest seller yet. Strummer's bitter, elegiac "Straight to

Hell" captured that mood best.

"The only band that matters" was a CBS Records marketing slogan, but it contained a taste of truth. If the idea of rock'n'roll rebellion has long been co-opted into a soundtrack for SUV commercials, Joe Strummer was a relic of a time when bands did matter, when they meant more than just corporate entertainment product. The Clash played anthems for a community that hated authority and wanted justice, that despised musical pap and loved getting out of their heads on energy and passion.

*Steven Wishnia, author of *Exit 25 Utopia*, was the bassist in the False Prophets and now plays in Gateria.*



NOUVEAU NUKE FILMS: Armageddon Not So Bad

By EMILY REINHARDT

Using his cell phone, the famous faux-CIA agent Jack Ryan (Ben Affleck) rescues the president from a nuclear device planted in a soda machine at a football game. Once the bomb goes off, Baltimore (an expendable city) is obliterated, but Affleck comes out of the catastrophe with only a few cuts on his face. He then heads for Ground Zero, walking around without protective gear, to discover what has happened to his mentor, Morgan Freeman.

Those scenes are from the 2002 summer blockbuster "Sum of All Fears," a highly imaginative film depicting a nuclear bomb blast with no long-lasting repercussions—no nuclear winters, no children born with six arms. Baltimore would be rebuilt, and American football games and soda machines would survive intact.

Since the end of the Cold War, nuclear explosions in films have become mere annoyances, destroying "unimportant" American cities, and valued allies, saving humanity from asteroids, aliens and even the Earth itself. This furthers the fiction of nuclear weapons as a sustainable threat. In a country where most citizens learn about nukes from the movies and TV, rather than from scientists or books or the left-wing media, this misrepresentation may very well lead to disaster.

The wildly popular Arnold Schwarzenegger is one of this phenomena's biggest culprits. In "True Lies" (1994), a romantic moment between Schwarzenegger and Jamie Lee Curtis is framed by the "beautiful" sight of a nuclear bomb destroying a Florida Key. Schwarzenegger's hand shading their faces from the bomb is apparently the only protection they need.

In both "Armageddon" and "Deep Impact," nuclear weapons are used to save the world,

exploding dangerous asteroids before they can damage the earth. In "Independence Day," the bomb is both destructive and redeeming: Houston is destroyed in a nuclear attempt to vanquish aliens, and the aliens are ultimately annihilated by a bomb planted in their hovering mothership (by a cigar-smoking Will Smith, no less). Then, in the forthcoming sci-fi thriller "The Core," wherein the Earth's pilot light goes out, a group of brave "Terranauts" travel to the center of the planet and reignite it with a nuclear bomb.

These films reside entirely in the present, never showing the consequences of these weapons. The audience never sees what Houston, Baltimore or that poor Florida Key look like after they are nuked.

Films of the 1950s and '60s were far more concerned with the dangers of the bomb. "Dr. Strangelove" (1964) and "On the Beach" (1959) replaced Hollywood's usual happy ending with the pointed warning that nuclear weapons could bring about the end of humanity.

These films also did not underestimate the impact of nuclear effects such as radiation. For example, in the 1954 B-movie "Them!" radioactive ants destroy Los Angeles. Similarly, 1970s films like "The China Syndrome" realistically portrayed the risks and consequences of nuclear power and radioactivity.

In the '80s, when Reagan reanimated fears of The Soviets and war threats surged, nuclear portrayals were more realistic, frightening and shattering, as in "The Day After" and "Special Bulletin." The British film "Threads" (1985) showed the young heroine devouring rats and barely surviving after a nuclear attack vaporized her loved ones.

And the comedic documentary "Atomic Cafe" (1982), was a hard-hitting look at the nuclear era and all its lunacies, including clips of children hiding under their school

desks as instructed by their teachers. "Atomic Cafe" openly mocked American naivete about the bomb, a reality much more terrifying than Ben Affleck pushing buttons on his cell phone.

As entertainment and star vehicles, many recent American films are advancing the idea that nuclear war wouldn't be such an awful thing.

Those films should carry a special warning label.

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NUCLEAR ISSUES

Radical Nuns Face 30 Years for Inspecting U.S. Nukes

By JOHN TARLETON

A year after the U.S. began bombing Afghanistan and seven weeks before U.N. weapon inspectors returned to Iraq, three Dominican nuns performed their own weapons inspection on the windswept high plains of northeastern Colorado.

Sisters Carol Gilbert, Jackie Hudson and Ardeth Platte entered Minuteman III missile silo N-8 near Greeley, Colorado at dawn last October 6 wearing white mop-up suits which said "Disarmament Specialists" in front and "Citizens Weapons Inspection Team" in back. After cutting through two fences, they hammered on the silo and on the tracks used to open the silo's 120-ton concrete lids. They also used their blood to make the sign of the cross on the tracks and on the silo. They concluded their inspection with a liturgy and a burst of songs and hymns.

Within an hour of the first fence cutting, military personnel arrived in humvees with their machine guns pointed at the nuns. The three women were arrested and forced to lie face down in the cold for four hours. They now each face 30 years in prison on charges of sabotage and destruction of government property.

"For some of you this news may be difficult," the nuns wrote afterward. "We can respond only by telling you that we are breaking through our own fears and intimidation, that we refuse to be immobilized by the intense call to patriotism that masks the lies, theft and killing of permanent war-making."

"If anyone did something like this in Russia or Iraq or Pakistan or India, we would be applauding them," added Anabel Dwyer, a Lansing, Michigan-based human rights lawyer and longtime friend of Sister Platte. "But if you do it here, it's criminal."

The inspection of silo N-8 was the first Plowshares action (see Berrigan page 11) performed on American soil since September 11 and the three nuns have been hit with the heaviest charges ever given to Plowshares activists. Hudson and Gilbert will both have high-powered attorneys when their trials begin March 31 while Platte will argue her case *pro se*.

"It's utterly outrageous for the government to have brought sabotage charges against these nuns," said Scott Poland, a Colorado attorney who will serve as Platte's legal advisor along with Dwyer. "They're just trying to cut them off at the knees. If they are convicted, they'll die in prison."

Hudson's lawyer Walter Geresh said the nuns have scrutinized international law and U.S. Constitutional law closely and concluded that nuclear weapons like the Minuteman III cause undue suffering,



Sisters Carol Gilbert, Jackie Hudson and Ardeth Platte entered Minuteman III missile silo N-8 near Greeley, Colorado at dawn last October 6 wearing white mop-up suits which said "Disarmament Specialists" in front and "Citizens Weapons Inspection Team" in back.

don't distinguish between combatants and non-combatants and are first-strike weapons and thus illegal under treaties like the Geneva Convention and the

United Nations Charter that the U.S. has signed.

"Nuremberg says you have to speak up," Geresh said, referring to the post-World

War II war crimes tribunal. "They felt they were justified in what they were doing."

The nuns are currently being held in the Clear Creek County Jail in Georgetown, Colorado. Bill Sulzman of the Colorado Springs-based Citizens for Peace in Space is doing support work for the women and promises that there will be supporters on hand from all over the country. He said a local minister in Georgetown has also gathered hundreds of signatures of support for the three nuns.

"They have become celebrities in that little mountain town. It's hard to overestimate their magnetism... You've got to see them in action."

Sulzman, an anti-nuke activist since the early '70s, realizes that few people will ever take the risks that Platte, Hudson and Gilbert have. Still, he hopes that more people will be inspired to take some kind of action.

"If you had a lot of people putting their body on the line, things would start to change," he said. "Maybe someday we'll get that critical mass of people who won't take government hand-out answers, who will ask more questions and take some risks."

Activists Inspect Nuclear Sites Worldwide

While U.N. weapons inspectors struggle to find any sign of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, civilian weapons inspectors around the world have made some unsettling discoveries of their own in recent months.

*Oct. 5—1,117 people were arrested on or near the Kleine Brogel Air Force Base, in what is likely the largest mass arrest in Belgian history. Kleine Brogel is home to 10 U.S. B-61 nuclear weapons.

*Oct. 6—Several protesters managed to enter Pine Gap, a giant American spy base in the middle of Australia. Pine Gap is used to provide satellite intelligence to US operations in Afghanistan, in the preparation for military action in Iraq and in the monitoring and interception of email and mobile phone communications.

*Oct. 6—Greeley, Colorado Three Dominican nuns were arrested for entering a Minuteman III Missile silo. They now face 30 years in jail. (See story above.)

*Nov. 8—Members of the Berkshire CIA (Citizens Inspection Agency) visited the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston, where Britain's nuclear

weapons are manufactured and maintained, to conduct a site inspection determining whether the UK government is complying with international laws on weapons of mass destruction. Police refused to let the inspectors into the base, and representatives from the Aldermaston management declined to meet with them. The inspectors then handed in a letter requesting a meeting with the Aldermaston management to discuss international inspection regimes for the UK's nuclear weapons and arrangements for allowing inspectors into the site. No United Nations weapons inspectors have ever been known to visit the UK to investigate operations at Aldermaston. The inspectors took soil and water samples from the area surrounding the base and then, in a spirit of cooperation, allowed the Ministry of Defense Police to inspect a collection of their own weapons—water pistols, a toy tank, plastic swords and a six-foot high model Trident missile.

*Nov. 16—80 civilian inspectors approached the Kattenberg Military Base in Amsterdam to determine the extent to which the base was cooperating in preparations for an attack on Iraq. Two inspectors managed to get onto base terrain, where they were overpowered by

military police, while others in a boat were stopped by police on the water.

*Dec. 29—Two activists entered the RAF Fylingdales Ballistic Missile Early Warning station in Yorkshire and were arrested while attempting to reach the satellite communication dome.

*Sometime in February—Civilian weapons inspectors from the Toronto-based Rooting Out Evil (www.rootingoutevil.org) will cross into the United States in Buffalo, New York to begin what they hope will be an extensive search for caches of U.S. chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Organizers for Rooting Out Evil say they have made the United States their first priority based on criteria provided by the Bush Administration.

According to those criteria, the most dangerous states are those run by leaders who: 1.) have massive stockpiles of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons 2.) ignore due process at the United Nations 3.) refuse to sign and honor international treaties, and 4.) have come to power through illegitimate means.

—JOHN TARLETON

NUCLEAR CHRONOLOGY

At the beginning of the new millennium, the world has some 30,000 nuclear weapons. This is more than enough to end life on earth.

Recent United States assertions of a

first-strike and preemptive nuclear attack policy, the U.S. withdrawal in 2002 from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and its current nuclear dispute with North Korea have pro-



duced a world situation of great tension, uncertainty and anxiety. The following chronology puts in perspective some events of the past five decades.

•1945 United Nations

Charter signed at San Francisco on June 26. World's first nuclear explosion, at Alamogordo, NM on July 16. Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, respectively. World War II ended September 2.

•1949 First nuclear test by the Soviet Union at Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan.

Philip Berrigan is best remembered as the rebel priest who galvanized the anti-war movement in May 1968 by leading a middle-of-the-night raid on an army induction center in Catonsville, Maryland and setting hundreds of draft files ablaze with homemade napalm. However, Berrigan, who passed away Dec 6, also helped launch the Plowshares movement in Sept 1980 when he and seven others entered a General Electric plant in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania and hammered on two nose cones for the Mark 12A warhead, poured blood on documents and offered prayers for peace.

Inspired by the Biblical injunction to "hammers swords into plowshares that nation will not lift sword against nation or will they ever again be trained to make war" (Micah 4:3), Plowshares activists around the world have continued battering and pouring their blood on long and short range missiles, nuclear submarines, bombers, transmitter antennas and satellite control facilities ever since. Many of them have done hard time in federal prisons, as much as five years. The 79th and most recent Plowshares action occurred Oct. 6 near Greeley, CO. (See page 10).

Berrigan was arrested numerous times and his anti-war activism landed him in prison for a total of 11 years. Shortly before he died, Berrigan gathered family and close friends at his side. "I die with the conviction, held since 1968 and Catonsville," he said, "that nuclear weapons are the scourge of the earth; to mine for them, manufacture them, deploy them, use them, is a curse against God, the human family, and the earth itself."

—JOHN TARLETON



PHILIP BERRIGAN, 1923-2002

A Lifetime Spent Beating Swords into Plowshares

"We think what a shame it would be to die now. Life's normal, only because the macabre has become normal. While we wait for rain, for football, for justice, on TV the old generals and the eager boy anchors talk of first strike and second strike capability, as though they're discussing a family board game. My friends and I discuss Prophecy, the film of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the dead bodies choking the river, the living stripped of their skin and hair, we remember especially the man who just melted into the steps of the building and we imagine ourselves like that, as stains on staircases."

----ARUNDHATI ROY, Booker prize-winning author, looks at the conflict over Kashmir from her home in New Delhi, June 2002

MAJOR ANTI-NUCLEAR GROUPS IN THE U.S.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are many local groups and general-focus organizations that are also committed to nuclear disarmament.

For an extensive internet list of anti-nuclear groups with links to their web sites, see the web page of Proposition One, <http://prop1.org/prop1/azantink.htm>.

•Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, 1801 18th St., NW, Suite 9-2, Washington, D.C. 20009, (202) 833-4668. And 1914 N. 34th St., Suite 407, Seattle, WA 98103, (206) 547-3175. [www.ananuclear.org](http://ananuclear.org) ananuclear@earthlink.net

•Antiwar.com, 520 S. Murphy Ave., #202, Sunnyvale, CA 94086. www.antiwar.com egarris@antiwar.com

•Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 6042 S. Kimbark Ave., Chicago, IL 60637, (773) 702-2555. www.thebulletin.org bulletin@thebulletin.org

•Center for Defense Information, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036-2109, (202) 332-0600. www.cdi.org info@cdi.org

•Center for Economic Conversion, 222 View St., Mountain View, CA 94041, (650) 968-8798. www.conversion.org cec@igc.org

•Council for a Livable World, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, #409, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 543-4100. www.clw.org clw@clw.org

•Federation of American Scientists,

307 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 546-3300. www.fas.org fas@fas.org

•Friends Committee on National Legislation, 245 Second St., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002-5795, (202) 547-6000, (800) 630-1330. www.fcnl.org fcnl@fcnl.org

•International Action Center, 39 W. 14th St., #206, New York, NY 10011, (212) 633-6646. www.iacenter.org iacenter@action-mail.org

•International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, 727 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139, (617) 868-5050. www.ippnw.org ippnwbos@ippnw.org

•Peace Action, 1819 H Street, NW, #420, Washington, D.C. 20006, (202) 862-9740. www.peace-action.org pdecy@peace-action.org

•Physicians for Social Responsibility, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1012, Washington, D.C. 20009, (202) 667-4260. www.psr.org psrnatl@psr.org

•Union of Concerned Scientists, 2 Brattle Square, Cambridge, MA 02238, (617) 547-5552. www.ucsusa.org securities@ucssusa.org

•Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1213 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19107, (215) 563-7110. www.wilpf.org/disarm/disarm.html wilpf@wilpf.org

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established by 12 States.

•1959 Antarctic Treaty demilitarized an entire region and created the first nuclear-weapon-free zone. It forbids all military activity, the testing of any kind of weapon and disposal of nuclear waste.

•1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty banned

nuclear weapon testing in the atmosphere, outer space and under water.

•1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibited military maneuvers and the placing of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in earth orbit and on celestial bodies. This was supplemented by a 1979 agreement to prevent the use of the moon

and other celestial bodies for military purposes.

•1968 The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) balanced a commitment by States without nuclear weapons not to develop or possess them, with one by nuclear-weapon States to negotiate their total elimination. The NPT entered into

force in 1970.

•1971 The Sea Bed Treaty prohibited the placement of nuclear weapons on or under the ocean floor beyond a 12-mile limit from the coast line.

•1972 A convention banning biological and toxin weapons. It entered into force in 1975, the first major disarmament agree-

STRATEGIC ARMS: TRICK OR TREATY?

BY IRA PANETH

The 2002 Treaty of Moscow, signed by the United States and Russia and proclaiming to represent radical cutbacks in their strategic nuclear weapon arsenals, is merely the latest instance of White House subterfuge and farce.

The agreement entails no significant reductions in the number of strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. will possess.

The treaty's function is a public relations fig leaf for the Pentagon's plans, wishes and fantasies to overhaul and expand U.S. nuclear arms capabilities with no debate either in Congress or society.

The mass media trumpeted a dramatic cut in numbers, from 6,000 strategic nuclear weapons on each side to 2,200 or less at the end of 2012. Multiple levels of phoniness are at operation here. The most blatant and absurd (excluding the notion that keeping 2,200 weapons is necessary) is the absence of any provision for the destruction of warheads or launchers.

The extent of arms control in this case is to separate the two basic components of a strategic nuclear weapon, and place them in different warehouses, or perhaps different floors of the same warehouse.

Alongside this stockpiling, a treacherous Pentagon numbers game exists akin to the accounting practices of the Enron and Arthur Andersen scandals. According to *Faking Nuclear Restraint*:

The Bush Administration's Secret Plan for Strengthening U.S. Nuclear Forces, a report by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), if the Pentagon's accounting "flexibility" is eliminated, the number of strategic nuclear weapons currently held by the United States balloons to 10,656.

This number, which is almost double the Moscow treaty's starting point, includes such weapons as those on Trident submarines in overhaul; bombs labeled "nonstrategic" that sit on F-16 and F-15 fighters or cruise missiles; and weapons that are inactive, meaning that the warheads lack tritium and other limited life components needed for the big boom.

This tabulation counts 7,970 active and 2,686 inactive warheads in 2002. NRDC's study shows that at the end of 2012, the "radical cutback" will have produced a numbers shift to 5,070 active warheads and 4,910 inactive: a total of 9,980 warheads, 656 fewer than now.

The treaty's goal of 2,200 active strategic warheads will be met by more creative accounting. The Pentagon will continue to categorize 800 warheads on F-16 and F-15 fighters as nonstrategic, discount 240 warheads in overhaul and establish a category of weapons called "responsive force" which will comprise 1,670 active warheads not on deployed systems. Finally 160 spare warheads won't be counted.

The treaty's next level of absurdity is to be found in how the three-page document

is designed for easy subversion. There is no timetable for the dismantling of weapons into warheads and launchers, and the agreement expires in 2012. Thus, if action is delayed until the very end and the treaty is not extended or augmented, 2012 can come and not a single weapon need be dismantled.

Additionally, the treaty does not delineate how weapons are to be cut. In the past, each specific area of weaponry, air, sea or land, was given a precise number. And, in one of the great ironies of arms control history, the treaty scraps the current ban on multiple warhead land-based missiles, which had been negotiated under Bush I. This step backward will allow Russia to redeploy weapons whose danger to the U.S. once ranted about.

The treaty's lack of concrete limits or methods by which solutions are to be achieved in a step-by-step way is damaging to the treaty process itself (a Bush Team general strategy) and lays the groundwork for far-reaching and destructive consequences.

Treaties should not rely for their implementation on the fine fellow-feeling of the men whose signatures they happen to bear. Bush and Putin are supposedly going to ensure that the treaty is pushed forward, yet it is anticipated that each will be long gone from the scene by 2012.

"This treaty will liquidate the legacy of the Cold War," Bush stated, and in one regard he is correct. Over the Cold War

decades, an arms control infrastructure—however shaky, incomplete and ineffective—was built. The Bush Team has wrecked that fragile entity.

The treaty dovetails with numerous other moves in this pursuit. Bush scuttled the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002. He has no intention of adhering to those provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that require nuclear-armed states to seek total disarmament. He has announced plans to resume production of nuclear triggers.

All these actions are part of the same desire in the elite ranks of the Pentagon and civilian government to continue using nuclear weapons as a mainstay of "full spectrum dominance," a fancy way of saying the ability to kick or threaten the shit out of anyone who challenges the United States empire.

The critical question is whether the U.S. citizenry can rally itself to compel its government to address the actual legacies of the Cold War, including the extensive poisoning of life forms by radioactive substances; the squandering of precious resources on an arms race with no other significant competitors; and nuclear weapons and power in all their variety. Until this happens, the world will grow more dangerous, and while the United States preaches the horror of everyone else's nuclear weapons, it will be leading the way, buttressing its power with the best nuclear arsenal money can be wasted on.

This is what would happen if modern nuclear warheads with the force of 20 megatons of TNT hit a major American city*.

Ground Zero to two miles:

Within 1/100 of a second, a fireball would form in every direction from Ground Zero enveloping downtown and reaching out for two miles. Temperatures would rise to 20 million degrees Fahrenheit, and everything—buildings, trees, cars and people—would be vaporized.

2 to 4 miles from Ground Zero:

The blast would produce pressures of 25 pounds per square inch and winds in excess of 650 miles per hour; these titanic forces would rip buildings apart and level everything, including reinforced concrete and steel structures.

4 to 10 miles from Ground Zero:

The heat would vaporize automobile sheet metal. Glass would melt. At this distance, the blast wave would create pressures of 7 to 10 pounds per square inch and winds of 200 miles per hour. Masonry and

wood frames would be leveled. 16 miles from Ground Zero:

The heat would ignite all easily flammable materials—houses, paper, cloth, gasoline, heating fuel—starting hundreds of thousands of fires. Fanned by blast winds still in excess of 100 miles per hour, these fires would merge into a giant firestorm more than 30 miles across, covering 800 square miles. Everything within this entire area would be consumed by flames.

Within minutes after the bomb exploded 1,000,000 would die. Among the 1,800,000 survivors, more than 1,100,000 would be fatally injured. Another 500,000 would sustain major medical injuries.

*Assumes a city of about 3,000,000 people.

Source: Physicians for Social Responsibility.



Hiroshima, Japan, August 7, 1945

United Nations Photo

ment in history committing States Parties (now including all the major military powers) not only to stop developing biological weapons but to destroy all stocks in their possession. The BWC does not have verification arrangements and a protocol providing for that is currently under negotiation. An Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty

restricted the development of defensive missile systems by the United States and the Soviet Union. The treaty banned ABM systems based at sea, in the air, in space and on mobile launchers. The U.S. has withdrawn from the treaty.

A Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) set limits on the number of

launchers of strategic weapons.

•1974 First nuclear test by India, at Pokharan, in the Rajasthan Desert.

•1978 The U.N. General Assembly's first special session on disarmament adopted a final document by consensus. It gave the highest priority to nuclear disarmament.

•1979 Agreement by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to limit the number and types of nuclear strategic missiles (SALT II). It expired in 1985 without entering into force.

•1982 U.N. General Assembly's second special session on disarmament could not agree on a final document.

U.S. IS FAKING NUCLEAR RESTRAINT

BY JOSEPH GERSON

Even before the trauma of the September 11 attacks and the wars that have followed, it was clear that the Bush administration was leading us into a more dangerous period of imperial reconsolidation, aggression and possible nuclear war.

Their vision, as Vice President Dick Cheney put it, was to impose "the arrangement [for] the 21st century."

One of the tragedies of the September 11 attacks has been the inability of United States opinion makers to understand and communicate that, as awful as these terrorist attacks were, they were not the worst act of terrorism and violence in history. If there is any September 11 lesson to learn, it is that indiscriminate mass murder is unacceptable, intolerable.

Along the way, it would be well to bear in mind an observation by Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor Seiji Yamaguchi. Speaking in Hiroshima last summer, Yamaguchi reminded his audience that the first atomic bombings were history's worst acts of terrorism.

Yet compared to today's nuclear warheads, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs were small and primitive. The U.S. has threatened to initiate nuclear war on more than 20 occasions since Nagasaki, recently on the eve of the Afghan invasion and now as the Bush administration prepares for war against Iraq.

The Bush administration has exploited the anguish and confusion of the past year to promulgate a dangerous nuclear weapons and war doctrine. That doctrine calls on the nation to prepare for a surge in

the production of new nuclear weapons, embracing pre-emptive nuclear attacks, and threatening nuclear attacks against both nuclear and non-nuclear countries.

The recent U.S.-Russian agreement signed by Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin is a manifestation of their tacit alliance rather than an arms reduction agreement. Neither actually committed to destroying a single nuclear warhead.

U.S. commitments to illusory nuclear superiority and to first-strike nuclear war fighting are made plain with its abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002, the Nuclear Policy Review (NPR) in 2002, the Nuclear Policy Review (NPR) and the planned fusion of the military's strategic (nuclear) and space commands.

In one of the most widely reported critiques of the NPR, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) concluded that the Bush administration is infatuated with nuclear weapons and is "faking nuclear restraint," as it attempts to "break out" of the nuclear Non-Proliferation (NPT) Treaty. Even the *New York Times* editorialised on March 12, 2002 that the U.S. had become a "nuclear rogue" State.

In addition to naming Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, China and Russia as its most likely nuclear targets, the administration is seeking to reinforce the Pentagon's "Full Spectrum Dominance" commitments with a "New Triad" of nuclear and conventional weapons, with so-called "missile defenses," and with a technologically more sophisticated nuclear weapons infrastructure. Far from honoring its NPR commitments to negotiate the total elimination of nuclear weapons, the Bush administration has

reaffirmed that nuclear weapons will remain the cornerstone of U.S. military power for the next 50 years.

The Bush administration is on a fast-track to deploy a missile defense system with the abrogation of the ABM treaty, the construction of a "missile defense" base in Alaska and the succession of increasingly secret and rigged testing.

Finally, there is the revitalization of the U.S. nuclear weapons infrastructure. The NPR calls for preparing for a "surge" in production of new nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons production plants are to be expanded; new design teams are to be assembled at the nuclear research laboratories, and new generations of nuclear weapons are to be designed and deployed.

The human race requires the abolition of nuclear weapons. To this end, an "Urgent Call to End the Nuclear Danger" has been launched by leading figures of the 1980s nuclear weapons freeze movement. The Call makes four demands on Washington: 1) Renounce first use of nuclear weapons, 2) Permanently end the development,

testing and production of nuclear warheads, 3) Seek agreement with Russia on the mutual and verified destruction of nuclear weapons withdrawn under treaties and 4) Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Authors of the Call hope to secure a million signatures this year and 10 million before the 2004 U.S. presidential election.

Joseph Gerson, Ph.D., is director of programs and director of the peace and economic security program of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in New England. Gerson's most recent book is *With Hiroshima Eyes: Atomic War, Nuclear Extortion, and Moral Imagination*.

Strategic Missile Forces and Nuclear Stockpiles in the Major Nuclear Powers, 1999

Country	ICBM's ¹	SLBMs/ SSBNs ²	Total Deployed Weapons ³
United States	550	423/18	7,200
Russia	771	332/21	5,900
China	15-20	12/1	400
France	---	64/4	440
Great Britain	---	48/3	160
Total	1,336	1,341	14,100

1. Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles 2. Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles. 3. Estimated. SOURCE: The Military Balance, 1999/2000, The International Institute for Strategic Studies; Natural Resources Defense Council; Center for Defense Information. Copyright 1998 Natural Resources Defense Council (Washington, DC). Reprinted by permission.

Caldicott Warns of Nuclear War

Helen Caldicott, Australian medical doctor and anti-nuclear activist, appeals to Americans in her 2002 book, *The New Nuclear Danger*, to "rise up to save themselves, their children, and all future generations" from nuclear war.

Military planners, scientists, corporate executives and think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation are promoting a new nightmarish level of nuclear weapons development, Caldicott warns.

She explains the extraordinary dangers of current United States nuclear strategy, planning and development, sponsored by the Bush administration.

In a piece in the *Baltimore Sun* on Oct 6, Caldicott declared that it was important to recall the medical consequences of the 1991 Iraqi war. "It was, in effect, a nuclear war," she said.

"By the end of that conflict," she said, "the U.S. had left between 300 and 800 tons of depleted uranium (DU) 238 in anti-tank shells and other explosives on the battlefields of Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

"The term 'depleted' refers to the removal of the fissionable element uranium 235 through a process that ironically

is called 'enrichment,'" she continued. "What remains, uranium 238, is 1.7 times as dense as lead. When incorporated into an anti-tank shell and fired, it achieves great momentum, cutting through tank armor like a hot knife through butter."

What other properties does uranium 238 possess?

"First, it is pyrophoric," she wrote. "When it hits a tank at high speed, it bursts into flames, producing aerosolized particles less than five microns in diameter, making them easy to inhale into the terminal air passages of the lung.

"Second, it is a potent radioactive carcinogen. Once inside the body—either in the lung if it has been inhaled, in a wound if it penetrates flesh or ingested since it concentrates in the food chain and contaminates water—it can produce cancer in the lungs, bones, blood or kidneys.

"Third, it has a half-life of 4.5 billion years, meaning the areas in which this ammunition was used will remain effectively radioactive for the rest of time."

Since 1991, the U.S. has also used DU weapons in Kosovo, Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan.



Birth defects have skyrocketed in Southern Iraq since the U.S. used over 300 tons of depleted uranium weapons in the 1991 Gulf War.



• 1990 The U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed to stop producing chemical weapons, to begin

destruction of existing stocks and each to retain no more than 5,000 tons of chemical agents.

• 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) agreed to by the U.S. and the Russian Federation (formerly the Soviet Union), reducing to 6,000 the number of "accountable warheads" each country

could have, and setting a limit for each of 1,600 deployed strategic nuclear delivery vehicles—bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarines.

Last U.S. explosive nuclear test.

• 1993 General Assembly adopted the Chemical Weapons Convention, the first globally verifiable multilateral disarma-

ment treaty. It banned the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons, and committed States parties to destroy all stocks. It came into force in 1997.

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) continued the cuts initiated by the U.S. and the Russian Federation under START I. By December 31, 2003, land-

A-NIGHTMARE: THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES

BY DONALD PANETH

"To exert power in every form was the essence of civilization," wrote Lewis Mumford, social philosopher, historian of cities and architectural critic.

"And now, I think, the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction."

And now human destiny is about to be revealed—Armageddon approaches.

On Sept. 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon dropped in on the Temple Mount, igniting the current Palestinian uprising. On Dec. 12, 2000, the United States Supreme Court handed the presidency to George W. Bush. On September 11, 2001, airliners slammed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing some 3,000 people. The following month, the U.S. bombed and attacked Afghanistan.

In 2002, Bush took the U.S. out of the 1972 Antibalistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and directed the Pentagon to build the initial stage of an antimissile system in Ft. Greely, Alaska.

In early 2003, United Nations inspectors searched for evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and the U.S. engaged in a dispute with North Korea over its decision to reinstate its nuclear arms program.

Will the world of tomorrow be an apocalyptic, self-annihilating world?

Christian Fundamentalists put forward the viewpoint of the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, a 2000-year-old work of necromancy, which refers constantly to the earlier prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah. Those true believers, from whom Bush draws much of his support, accept the Book of Revelation's end-of-the-world prophecy.

The End Times is the period during which the Apocalypse will take place. The Apocalypse, from the Greek word meaning "revelation," is used to describe the world's cataclysmic end and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Armageddon represents the Final Battle between Christ and the Anti-Christ, an evil figure whom He will defeat. At the Final Judgment, Christ will resurrect the dead and consign the righteous to eternal life and the evil to eternal damnation.

To true believers, the end of the world seems less a threat than the fulfillment of a promise, observed *Time* magazine (July 1, 2002). *Time* took note that Kyle Watson had written on his prophecy news website, AtlantaChristianWeekly.com: "Try viewing prophecy and current events as how much closer we are to being with Christ in heaven."

Other observers also look to the stars above. Karl Grossman, journalist, is the author of *Weapons in Space* (2001). Despite the 1967 Outer Space Treaty which prohibits the placing of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in earth orbit and on celestial bodies, "The U.S. is preparing to make space a new arena of war," Grossman writes.

The U.S. Space Command's vision for 2020 is control of space and from there domination of the earth. This agenda will require the placing in space of laser beams, orbiting battle platforms and other nuclear-powered weapons.

Globalization of the world economy will continue, the Space Command asserts, "with a widening gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots.'" The view is that by controlling space and the earth below, the U.S. will be able to keep those "have-nots" in line.

Multiplication of the numbers of impoverished human beings in the world is the whimper behind the big bang being planned by the U.S. military.



Artwork by Lee Gough

Alternatives to apocalypse?

The reality—without reference to religious texts—is that each and every problem the people of the U.S. and the world faces has known and detailed solutions.

The solutions are as programmatic as the Pentagon's extensive plans, though a

lot less expensive. For example, \$9 billion would produce water and sanitation for all who lack it; \$13 billion would pay for basic health care and nutrition.

The last hope for humankind requires that ordinary people act to save a world that may well be destined to die.

APOCALYPSE: FAR RIGHT CONJURES NUCLEAR DEMONS

BY MICHELLE GILKES

To the surprise of secularists, the Book of Revelation has seeped into public consciousness. It seems commonplace nowadays to find the media either explaining or touting biblical prophecy. The subject gained the cover of *Time* magazine in 2002 as well as an in-depth study by Frontline. The entertainment industry has often used prophecy as fodder for entertainment whether for films—"The Omen," "End of Days," "The Seven Seals"—or Marilyn Manson crowning himself as "Anti-Christ Superstar."

Why is the apocalypse being discussed seriously by conventional news outlets? Because so many people seem to accept a system of religious doctrine concerning last or final matters. It even shapes their political judgments. A Time/CNN poll found that 33 percent of Americans are paying more attention to how the news might relate to biblical prophecy, while 59 percent said they believed the events in

Revelation are going to come true.

The Remnant by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins is a best-selling novel, the tenth in a series of novels which has sold more than 50 million copies. The books give a dramatized account of what Christians call the Tribulation, the period of seven years when the Anti-Christ (Satan's front man) takes over the earth.

However, LaHaye is not your ordinary spinner of tales. According to the Institute for First Amendment Studies, he is founder of the Christian Heritage College, member of the executive board of the Moral Majority and on the editorial board of the *Christian Enquirer*. Most importantly, he was a founding father of the Council for National Policy, an influential conservative group whose members include Oliver North, Jack Kemp, Pat Robertson and Jesse Helms. The CNP hosts illustrious guest speakers such as George W. Bush.

So it may be no surprise to learn that *The Remnant* offers a plot where Baghdad

is Satan's headquarters, and an evil former United Nations Secretary-General operating from Iraq uses peacekeepers to enforce global control. The series highlights Israel as the background for Christian prophetic events. This religious worldview could explain the reasoning behind the Christian Coalition's stand on Israel during their 2002 "Road to Victory" conference of which the *Washington Post* wrote: "For more than two hours, prominent conservatives... declared that the U.S. must help protect and preserve Israel at all costs, expand the nation's current borders, and forget about an independent Palestine."

According to James Tabor, professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, much of the chronology Christians attribute to Revelation is not in the text. There is no reference to an Anti-Christ, Rapture (when Christians will suddenly rise to heaven and the rest will be left behind) or the Tribulation. Those three references are

found in other parts of the Bible but have been meshed into the interpretation of Revelation. Not all Christians take the book literally. Mainstream Christianity interprets the text as allegorical.

The text of the Book of Revelation mostly presents an array of esoteric symbols and violent predictions of God's wrath visited on a sinful mankind. There are seven seals which when broken take peace from the earth and spread death, pestilence, famine, earthquakes and heavenly signs.

If one adheres to End Times beliefs, Revelation can only inspire fear and paranoia.

The dangers of the apocalyptic world view is perhaps best described by Chip Berlet, author of *Dances With Devils*, who writes, "Ritual purification campaigns by the Christian Right continue to spread divisiveness. For some apocalyptic Christians, the End Times have arrived, and the witch hunt for satanic agents has begun in earnest."

based ICBMs with multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRCs) were to be completely eliminated with neither side having more than 3,000-5,000 strategic nuclear warheads. START II was ratified by the U.S. in 1996 and in 2000 by the Russian Federation. Under a 1997 Helsinki Protocol, the implementation

deadline was extended to December 31, 2007.

• 1995 The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was indefinitely extended, with strengthened accountability arrangements, incorporation into a process of annual preparatory meetings leading up to five-year review conferences.

• 1996 The International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion sought by the U.N. General Assembly on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons and agreed



unanimously that the nuclear-weapon States had "an obligation to... bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament."

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to stop all explosive nuclear tests adopted by a vote of 158 to 3 with 5 abstentions in the General Assembly, after Conference on

HIDDEN SUBSIDIES OF NUCLEAR POWER IN THE U.S.

BY ADAM AUSTER

The hidden strength of the nation's 103 nuclear power plants lies in the massive subsidies that made and keep them profitable. But these subsidies have a hidden weakness—their vulnerability to public pressure.

Government guarantees and protections enabled electric utilities to build nuclear plants in the 1960s and 1970s without financial risk. In 1973, President Nixon announced a Manhattan Project-style effort to complete a thousand private (but government-backed) reactors by the year 2000.

Nixon's plan, and the fate of the nuclear industry, founders when citizen activists targeted and ended nuclear construction subsidies in the 1980s. Without this funding, construction ground to a halt.

Follow the Money

Today, hidden operating subsidies underwrite the profitability of running existing reactors. The subsidies include more than \$145 billion in direct federal aid since 1947, according to a study by the Renewable Energy Policy Project.

These include direct outlays by such agencies as the Energy Research and Development Administration (\$326 million in 1999 alone) and indirect subsidies

such as the liability exemption that saved the industry \$359 million in avoided insurance costs in 1999.

Other subsidies are embedded in the structure of the industry and have not been fully estimated in dollars.

For instance, nuclear plant operators do not bear the cost of cancers, birth defects, genetic damage or lowered immunity related to uranium mining, fuel fabrication, radioactive waste or routine leaks and emissions from nuclear plants.

Additional subsidies are related to uncompensated environmental and health effects from the mining and milling of nuclear fuel; a legal limit to the liability that a nuclear plant operator faces in the event of a nuclear accident; lax regulation, allowing nukes to run cheaper and for more days of the year but at greater risk; and Congressional agreement (after lobbying by the nuclear industry) for government to take over the dirty and expensive job of storing nuclear wastes for hundreds of thousands of years.

Anti-Nuclear Power

The technical problems of splitting the atom to make electricity have been subject to intense debate among experts since the industry's inception in the 1950s. However, it was not until the 1970s that safety concerns galvanized a grassroots

movement against nuclear energy.

The regional anti-nuclear alliances of the 1970s used nonviolent direct action to dramatize nuclear safety issues and confront the nuclear industry—tactics which led to mass arrests around the country and catapulted nuclear power into the public spotlight.

While concern about catastrophic accidents and routine releases of radiation led the movement against nuclear power, activists soon targeted finance as the industry's key vulnerability.

Although Congress and federal regulators generally ignored calls for reform of nuclear safety and operations, state governments yielded to pressure from activists to reject electric rates and loans to pay for nuclear construction.

Without this public funding, utilities either abandoned their nuclear expansion plans or went bankrupt.

Nuclear Power Today

The singular vulnerability of nuclear reactors to terrorist attack has led to new calls to close plants such as Entergy's two Indian Point reactors 25 miles north of Manhattan.

Yet there are formidable obstacles to closing the plants.

Nuclear safety and security are regulated solely by a federal bureaucracy that is

both insulated from public participation and solidly pro-nuclear.

State governments could buy and close nuclear plants, much as the Long Island Lighting Company sold its Shoreham reactor to the Long Island Power Authority for \$5 billion in 1992—but such a strategy would require the active intervention of state government on a plant-by-plant basis.

Public Pressure

However, today's operating nuclear plants may be vulnerable to public pressure against their operating subsidies.

Direct and hidden subsidies increase the profitability and attractiveness of operating nuclear plants. They confer the appearance that the nukes are cheaper to operate than they really are.

Meanwhile, artificially cheap nuclear power discourages energy efficiency and boosts demand for electricity.

Power plant operators will run nuclear plants as long as the subsidies flow—but they flow through public policy and government blessing.

Adam Auster is an environmentalist in Cambridge, MA; he was a staff member of the Clamshell Alliance which campaigned against the construction of the nuclear power plant at Seabrook, NH.

Indian Point Plagued by Security Failures

BY MIKE BURKE

The security guards work up to 16 hours a day, sometimes for seven days straight. Morale is low. Their confidence in management may be even lower. They admit being under-qualified and under-trained in key security aspects. Also, they often have very little experience. Some even show up for work drunk.

These are not the security guards at the local shopping mall, but the men and women entrusted to protect perhaps the most sensitive facility in the New York area, the Indian Point nuclear power plant.

Twenty million people live within a 50-mile radius of Indian Point's reactors. An attack on the facility could have apocalyptic consequences and could render the entire New York City metro area uninhabitable. And such an attack is no longer inconceivable to many: on Sept. 11 the two hijacked planes that crashed into the Twin Towers flew directly over the Indian Point nuclear site in Buchanan.

But a recently released study by Indian Point's owner revealed that 81 percent of guards felt they could not adequately protect the site from an attack.

"This report suggests that security at Indian Point has more holes than Swiss cheese," said Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY).

In the 18 months after the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington, so-called homeland security has become a key legislative priority. But at Indian Point and nuclear sites across the country, the

INDIAN POINT BY THE NUMBERS

- 2: Number of atomic reactors currently operating at Indian Point.
- 1,960: Megawatthours produced by both reactors at full power.
- 2,000,000: The number of average homes that can be powered.
- \$438 million: Annual gross income of Indian Point complex (100 percent capacity).
- 21,000,000: The number of people living and working within 50 miles of Indian Point.
- 40+: Number of counties, municipalities, and school boards passing resolution calling for Indian Point closure and evacuation plan overhaul.
- 103rd: Indian Point's safety ranking among 103 currently operating U.S. nuclear power plants.
- 2,400: Number of backlog repairs at Indian Point reactors.
- 50 miles: Radius of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) "Peak Injury" Zone.
- 17.5 miles: Radius of NRC's "Peak Fatality" Zone.
- 10 miles: Evacuation zone in the event of a catastrophic event at Indian Point.
- 6-8: Number of hours advance notice of catastrophe required by evacuation plan.
- 0: Number of four-lane highways that exit the 10-mile radius.
- 1: Number of cars each family will use to evacuate, according to the current plan.
- 3: Average number of locations any given family will be on any given day.
- 500,000: Cars that could be attempting to exit the 10-mile radius simultaneously.
- 100: Evacuation plan percent of children in schools whom parents must abandon to the evacuation process.
- 100: Percent of parents who must evacuate without their school-age children, according to the plan.
- 0: Probability that most parents will willingly evacuate separately from their children.
- \$5-10 billion: Cost of a truly effective evacuation plan, including several 8-lane radial highways and feeder roads, shelters, system-wide communications, training, dedicated staff, dedicated vehicles, medical response capability, planning, drills, tests, etc.

Sources: Nuclear Regulatory Commission, NYS Assembly Reports, Poughkeepsie (NY) Journal, Union of Concerned Scientists, New York Times, Nuclear Control Institute, Pace Energy Project, Natural Resources Defense Council, Riverkeeper, Marist College, Nuclear Information and Resource Service, Westchester Medical Center, Radiation and Public Health Project, and calculations from data in those sources.

federal government and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have been repeatedly assailed for failing to increase security or to take proper precautions in the event of an attack.

In early January, Sen. Hillary Clinton

(D-NY) accused the NRC of failing to protect nuclear sites from attacks after Sept. 11. Clinton called for a federal security coordinator for each nuclear power plant and the creation of federal teams to protect plants from attacks.

nuclear weapons.

• 1998 India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests and declared themselves nuclear weapon States.

• 1999 50th anniversary meeting of NATO adopted a new strategic doctrine, affirming the role of nuclear weapons. The Russian Federation also set out a new strategic doctrine, and affirmed a role for

nuclear weapons.

• 2000 Sixth five-year review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty declared that "total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons." The next review conference is scheduled to be held in 2005.

Currently the private firm Wackenut employs the workers at Indian Point Unit 2, which is owned by the Entergy corporation. Wackenut is the second-largest provider of security services in the country and has long been charged with cutting security costs and hiring unqualified staff to maximize profit.

Texas terminated its prison contract with Wackenut after reports that guards were sexually abusing inmates. In New Mexico prisons, nine stabbings and five murders occurred on Wackenut's watch, all within the first year of operations. Investigative journalist Greg Palast said of the situation: "New Mexico's privately operated prisons are filled with America's impoverished, violent outcasts—and those are the guards."

And now Wackenut oversees the guards at Indian Point.

To make matters worse, in mid-January, a new study commissioned by Gov. George Pataki confirmed the fears of many critics, finding that the county's evacuation plan would fail in the event of a nuclear disaster.

Still the word from Entergy is to stay calm and be patient.

A recent booklet on Indian Point distributed to residents of Westchester County discussed how to react in the event of a disaster: "... You should evacuate as promptly as possible, but you will have plenty of time to leave."

"The current plan is a sham that has put the lives of New Yorkers at risk for decades," said John Flanigan of the New York Public Interest Group. "This threat has been looming over New York City like a black cloud for too long. We need to shut off this ticking time bomb once and for all."

• Jan. 10, 2003 North Korea announced that it was withdrawing from the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; its withdrawal would take effect in three months.

Source: *Disarmament: A Basic Guide* by Bhaskar Menon (UN 2001); New York Times.

Disarmament was unable to reach consensus on the text it negotiated. The U.S. Senate rejected the treaty in 1999.

• 1997 A comprehensive ban on anti-personnel land mines and destruction of existing stocks agreed to through a process initiated by non-governmental organizations. The U.S. refused to adhere to the ban.

Visualize Resistance



Ins and die-ins began taking place with increasing frequency not only in big cities and liberal college towns but in unlikely places such as Augusta, Georgia, Sioux City, South Dakota, Centralia, Washington, Sandton, Idaho and Kingston, New York. Hundreds of thousands of more Americans took to the streets January 18-20 to honor Martin Luther King and speak out against the war. Even larger worldwide protests are expected February 15. Some participants seek to stop the war because they believe it would be an unwise use of American power while many others have begun to draw links between war and corporate-led globalization and are questioning whether such a system could ever produce justice abroad or at home.

A broad, diverse new anti-war movement emerged last fall as the Bush administration stepped up its calls for pre-emptive war on Iraq. Shaking off the fear and the uncertainty that had descended on much of America after September 11, protesters marked the first anniversary of the Afghan bombing Oct. 6 with spirited Not In Our Name rallies across the country and followed weeks later with an anti-war march in Washington that drew upward of 100,000 people. Marches, rallies, vigils, banner-hangs, teach-



a collaboration of IMC photographers around the country



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David Meinhardt Madison, WI

OIL AND POLITICS IN VENEZUELA

What's with all the strikes?

BY JOHN TARLETON

Carlos Fernandez, president of Venezuela's chamber of commerce, recently spoke in New York at David Rockefeller's Council of the Americas. At his side was Carlos Ortega, president of the CTV, Venezuela's largest labor union. Outside, pot-banging protesters denounced the two men for their repeated efforts to topple the democratically elected government of Hugo Chavez. The day's events highlighted one of the most striking features of Venezuela's ongoing economic and political crisis: the nation's most powerful union continues siding with business leaders against the working poor.

The struggle between Venezuela's government and recalcitrant business and labor leaders revolves around control of oil. Venezuela is the world's fifth largest producer of crude oil and PDVSA, its giant state-owned

oil monopoly, is a \$50 billion per year enterprise that accounts for 80% of the country's exports and half the national budget. Oil workers are among the highest paid in Venezuela and their union (led by Ortega) has sided with PDVSA in its efforts to have the company privatized. Chavez and his followers see the company's billions of dollars in oil revenues as key to transforming the lives of the 80 percent of Venezuelans who live in poverty. The company's 40,000 workers represent a tiny fraction of the

labor force but are strategically placed to wreak havoc on Venezuela's economy.

While the business-led "general strike" that was launched December 2 in order to force Chavez to call early elections has been a flop mainly limited to the upscale neighborhoods of eastern Caracas, oil company executives presided over the sabotage of pumps, pipelines, tankers and other ships, trucks and key points

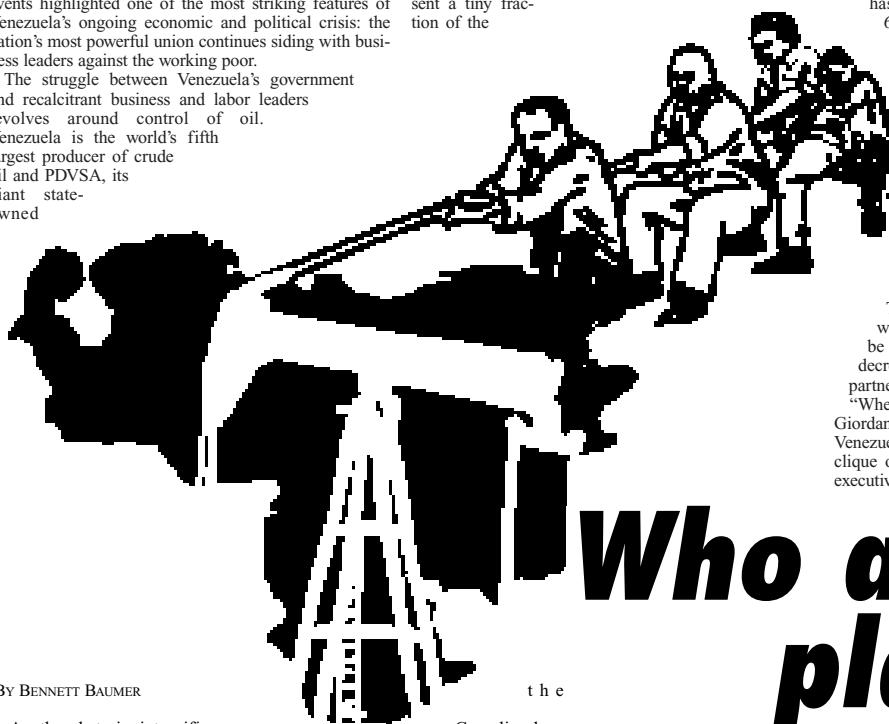
in the flow of oil from the ground to the consumer that has reduced oil production from 3 million to 600,000 barrels per day. Some executives also made public statements that supplies had been contaminated and oil facilities booby-trapped to cause environmental disasters if restarted.

The shutdown has cost the government \$4 billion, according to Rafael Ramirez, the minister of energy and mines.

"If they had tried anything like this inside the United States, we would see the White House calling them terrorists, locking them up in Guantanamo Bay, and suing them for the millions of dollars of losses that they have caused," notes Narconews.com's Al Giordano, who has written extensively about the Venezuelan crisis.

Two thousand dissident managers and employees were fired in mid-January and more changes could be on the way as Chavez implements a Nov. 2001 decree that that makes the government the majority partner in any new energy venture in Venezuela.

"When the final history is written of Dec. 2002," Giordano says, "it will be known as the month that the Venezuelan democracy took its oil industry back from a clique of over-paid and corrupt coup-plotters after the executives tried to sabotage it."



BY BENNETT BAUMER

As the rhetoric intensifies, so does violence and the stakes in the nearly two-month national strike in Venezuela. Demonstrations and counter-demonstrations mark a typical day in Caracas, often leaving participants battered, bruised, and even dead. Since the failed coup of April 2002, Venezuela has been caught between President Hugo Chavez's backers — "Chavistas" — and the opposition, the "Coordinadora Democrática," a coalition of forces from labor and management.

President Hugo Chavez

A mestizo born to schoolteachers in rural Venezuela, Chavez led a military coup in 1992 against the Andres-Perez administration which implemented austerity policies that disproportionately affected the poor after the oil boom soured. Chavez survived a military coup in April of 2002 by forces angered over recent constitutional referendums that enfranchised the poor. The referendums, as well as his work to solidify his control over the military, have allowed Chavez to retain his tenuous hold on power.

Coordinadora Democrática is comprised of business owners, oil industry management, unions representing workers in the oil industry, and the middle class. Most in the opposition are light skinned, wealthy professionals. The coalition's central demand during the national strike is the ouster of Chavez through a referendum on his power. Analysts argue that the opposition has crippled itself by not putting forth a clear list of demands other than Chavez's departure, which many say would be unconstitutional.

The Poor

Estimated at almost half of the country, the chronically unemployed and underpaid are Chavez's main base of support. They voted constitutional changes through referendums during Chavez's first years, providing themselves with institutional structures that gave community bodies decision-making powers. The poor also gained constitutional land rights—an important reform as many Venezuelans live on land that is not legally theirs.

CTV union

"Confederacion de Trabajadores

Venezolanos," representing workers in the oil industry, is the most influential union in the opposition. Critics charge that Carlos Ortega, the union's leader, became president through fraudulent elections. CTV workers are the backbone of a strike that has shut down oil production.

Business and Oil

Fedecamaras and PDVSA are the two main business and oil players. Fedecamaras is affiliated with the government, though its aim is to promote business in the private sector. The president of Fedecamaras, Carlos Fernandez, appears regularly on television with the CTV's Ortega, delivering updates on the strike. PDVSA is the state-owned oil company and its striking top and middle managers have aided the CTV in shutting down oil production.

The Press

The private Venezuelan press almost uniformly backs the opposition to Chavez. Owners of the press met with coup plotters during April. Although Chavez supporters have protested the biased coverage

from anti-government media outlets, Chavez himself has taken few steps to censor the privately owned TV stations and newspapers.

Military

Most of the military backed ex-Fedecamaras boss Pedro Carmona in the April 2002 coup attempt, though certain sectors supported Chavez and helped him regain the Presidency. After a purge of the disloyal military elements, the military now backs Chavez.

Other Nations

The U.S. hastily recognized Carmona when he momentarily seized power in April, although it has now assumed an officially neutral stance. Cuba and Brazil have offered Chavez moral support and economic help in the form of food and oil. Chavez ironically said he wanted to create an "axis of good" with Cuba and Brazil.

Bennett Baumer is an organizer for Local 1199 SEIU and has worked with independent union movements in Mexico

Voices in the Wilderness:

REPORT FROM THE GROUND IN IRAQ

Since September 2002, seasoned nonviolent activists from voices in the Wilderness have been on the ground in with the people of Iraq while at the same time working to prevent a US attack. Here are excerpts from some of their recent reports:

The Women of Basra

"Basra was once a beautiful, thriving port city in the southern part of the country. As with most large Iraqi cities, a river runs through it, bringing life to the desert and its inhabitants. In Basra, it is the Shat al Arab that once was the prominent feature of the area. This peaceful, meandering river that flows slowly through the city is a mocking reminder of the danger that lies outside its boundaries. The river and the marshlands give way to the Highway of Death—where the United States bombed a retreating Iraqi army and left behind what now identifies this land—landmines, depleted uranium, nuclear waste."

The women of Basra have lost husbands to war and children to leukemia. They have born more children prematurely or with such deformities that they wished that God had taken the child from their wombs. They are sleepless, hungry, their hair falls out, their milk dries up. They have no work, no jewelry or furniture remaining to sell for food.

They are worn down from 10 years of war with Iran. And they have seen more troubles with 12 years of harsh sanctions. Now daily bombing attacks and air raid sirens keep their children scared and wetting the bed at night.

There is no more suffering to extract from these women who have known sorrow all their days. No pleasure on earth that they have found. Without seeing their faces you can see the grief of the women and their daughters. They wear their sorrow in the folds of their garments. The only relief that they may know is the passing from this life.

For these are the women of constant sorrow." D'Ann Johnson
Jan. 12, 003

Baghdad Symphony

"When you imagine Iraq, imagine the Baghdad Symphony.

Some of our members had presented them with a gift from the Vancouver Symphony, things like strings and chin rests and such that are not available here any longer. But the 50-member symphony has played on. In conversation, one of the symphony members was asked what had been the hardest thing for him about the war and the sanctions. The answer: "When a missile hit my house and killed my two children." The night we were at the Baghdad Symphony they played Bach and Bizet.

And when the power failed, they lighted candles and kept playing."

Gabe Huck

Jan. 2, 2003

Christmas at a Mosque

"On Christmas Day, for example, our delegation made an unexpected visit to a group of Sunni and Shiite

Muslim clerics. These men welcomed us and sent a messenger to invite local Christian clergy. Together, sitting on carpets, we shared a lunch of olives and rice, hummus and chicken. The Muslim clerics wanted us to understand that they consider as brothers and sisters all men and women "of the Book"—Muslims, Christians and Jews. They urged us to understand that they are not fundamentalists or terrorists. They told us that their constant prayer is for peace."

"The mosque in which we sat together was bombed by the United States in both 1991 and 1998; the Muslims said they will rebuild it "again and again and again" as necessary.

These generous men, like all others we talk to all over Iraq, insist that they have no hard feelings towards the American people. They view the "one main source of evil in the world now" to be the current administration in Washington.

"Why do they treat Iraq as guilty until proven innocent?" they ask.

And then they were pressing more food upon us, insisting that we stay for sugared tea served in little glasses in the traditional Iraqi way, pressing upon us their good wishes as we left.

My throat ached with tears. It was most humbling to be treated with such "Christian kindness" by Muslims on Christmas Day in a year when the image of the Prince of Peace seems very faint in my own country."

Theresa Kubasak

Jan. 1, 2003

Life Goes On

The longer I'm here, the more I see behind the outward picture of normalcy, the more I feel the heaviness that the people carry as they go through the day. But I also see a very strong spirit and sense of determination to survive, to rise above the moments of despair, even if it is only for the sake of their children. Yet there are times of celebration and joy.

Families joke around and tease each other. Children are playful and mischievous. The streets of Baghdad still bustles with work and activity. New buildings arise out of the rubble. Musicians continue to make music that brings them life. As much as possible, even in the face of war, life goes on....

Peggy Gish

Dec. 26, 2002

For more information, see www.iraqpeaceteam.org.

10 Million to March on February 15

Organizers for the Stop the War Coalition expect 10 million people to participate in a worldwide peace protest to be held on Saturday, February 15 under the slogan of "Don't attack Iraq." There will be protests in New York, Oslo, Berlin, Bangkok, Ramallah, Rome, Cairo, Copenhagen, London, Manila, Amsterdam, Paris, Stockholm, Glasgow, Athens, Antwerp, Skopje, Barcelona, Helsinki, Belfast, and more. The protest was inspired by a Nov. 15 anti-war protest of 500,000 people in Florence, Italy that capped the first-ever European Social Forum. Organizers predict February's event will be the world's largest-ever simultaneous political demonstration.

Halting the War Machine in Its Tracks

A pair of train drivers in western Scotland refused Jan. 8 to transport arms believed to be destined for British forces in the Persian Gulf. The anti-war revolt was the first such industrial action by British workers since 1973 when dockworkers refused to load munitions intended for Chile's military regime led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

NY Woman Heads for Iraq as Human Shield

Manna Jo Greene says she'll "do whatever it takes" to stop a war in Iraq. For Greene, a 57-year-old environmental activist from upstate New York, that means traveling to Iraq as a human shield against U.S. bombs. As part of the "Become the Change" campaign, Greene is headed to Iraq to live with the Iraqi people before bombs begin falling. Greene believes that "the fact that 5,000 Americans are willing to do this will deter the war." For more information, visit www.becomechange.org.

Protesting Makes Me Smile

Protesting is good for you. A British study published last month at the University of Sussex analyzed 160 protests of 40 activists to obtain the results. "The main factors contributing to a sense of empowerment were the realization of the collective identity, the sense of movement potential, unity and mutual support within a crowd," said social psychologist Dr. John Drury in a statement. In other words, taking action can translate into support within the protest group that can help an individual overcome stress, pain, anxiety and depression. The positive feelings appeared to have a long-lasting effect. "Empowering events were almost without exception described as joyful occasions," said Drury.

Bush's Bullying Frays U.S.-North Korean Relations

We're interested in peace on the Korean peninsula," President Bush said in early January after meeting with South Korean and Japanese diplomats.

However, before its recent "shift" to finally engage in open dialogue with North Korea, the U.S. attitude toward the North has been marked with harsh rhetoric and cold behavior.

Soon after Bush's peace parley, Donald Gregg, former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, commented on the Charlie Rose Show, "The North Koreans have not gotten from the Bush Administration what it got from the Clinton Administration, which is a joint statement saying we [U.S.] and North Korea would no longer harbor hostile relations toward each other and we'd work for improved relations."

Gregg stressed that North Koreans seem to genuinely fear an attack from the U.S.

for several reasons including Bush's 'axis-of-evil' comments, the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review which listed North Korea

as one of seven countries the U.S. may preemptively strike with nuclear weapons, the U.S.'s swift victory in Afghanistan and the build-up for war in Iraq. North Korea's fear that it may be attacked next has not been dispelled.

Shortly after the Bush administration took office in Jan. 2001, the U.S. dismissed the usefulness of talking with North Korea. When South Korean President Kim Dae Jung visited Washington that February, he found Bush to be distrustful of the North

Koreans and skeptical toward his "Sunshine" policy of peaceful engagement and dialogue with the North.

However, eased relations between the two countries have led to increasing personal contact among people of both countries and more economic cooperation. "The Sunshine policy has been very successful," says Karin Lee, a senior associate at the East Asia Policy Education Project at the Friends Committee on National Legislation. "Kim Dae Jung changed the way South Korea interacts with North Korea. The Sunshine policy has changed the way South Koreans view the North."

The recent election victory of President-elect Roh Moo Hyun is a harbinger of changing attitudes. Roh, a former human rights lawyer, is a firm supporter of former President Kim's "Sunshine" policy and calls for continued engagement with the North. His opponent Lee Hoi Chang, a favorite of the Bush administration, endorsed a less open North Korea policy.

There was little-to-no dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea during Bush's first year in office. Then on Jan. 29, 2002 the President suddenly included North Korea in the "axis-of-evil." Since that time, relations have deteriorated even further.

The recent standoff between the U.S. and North Korea has brought to light a number of serious issues previously swept aside—one of the most important being North Korea's ambitions for a nuclear weapons program.

In 1994, the U.S. and North Korea came together on an "Agreed Framework." In exchange for a U.S. promise not to attack, an annual supply of 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil and an agreement to build two light water reactors by 2003, North Korea agreed to shut down its graphite-moderated reactor at Yongbyon and to suspend its nuclear weapons development.

When North Korea's leader Kim Jong Il admitted last October to a secret uranium enrichment program, Washington interpreted it as a violation of 1994 agreement and halted delivery of fuel oil supplies in December.

North Korea withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Jan. 10 and the U.S. has responded by alternately threatening food sanctions that could kill millions in the impoverished Stalinist state and offering financial aid if North Korea dismantles the plant and submits to UN weapons inspections. Many people are just wondering where all of this may lead us.

Stephen Schwartz, publisher of the Bulletin for Atomic Scientists, says it's unclear whether North Korea has nuclear weapons. However, he does believe the situation is dangerous and urges people to ask why North Korea even wants nuclear weapons. "Nuclear weapons give a country a certain level of prestige, which North Korea does not have. We have to understand why they are doing this."

They're doing this because they fear the U.S. Kim Jong Il is using nuclear weapons as a deterrent."

UK Nuke Plant Caught Napping

More than 30 anti-nuclear protesters used ropes, ladders and wire-cutters Jan. 13 to break into the central control building of the Sizewell B nuclear power station in eastern England. Greenpeace, which campaigns for an end to nuclear energy, said it staged the break-in to expose poor security at Sizewell B and other nuclear facilities. Mike Harrison, the plant's maintenance manager, condemned the protest as a stunt. "It is a totally irresponsible and criminal act which has caused damage to the insulation after a fence was broken through and a door smashed," he told the Associated Press.

Modern War: Men Fight. Women and Children Die.

A recent report by Child Advocacy International reveals that the international arms trade hits women, children, and the poor the hardest. Over 85 percent of major conflicts since World War II have taken place in poor countries, and more than two million children died in wars from 1986-1996. Western countries often supply both sides in a conflict, eating into the already tiny sums available for health and education. Unfortunately, the world's biggest arms dealer—the US—has refused to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has blocked an international criminal court. In 2001, a US arms treaty negotiator promised to block any agreement that infringes the "right to bear arms."

Lula to Army: Food Not Bombs

Brazil's new leftist government recently suspended a \$760 million purchase of a dozen new jet fighter planes, saying it would look for cheaper alternatives like renting or buying used aircraft.

25 million out of Brazil's 175 million people suffer from hunger and incoming president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has made eliminating the social problem his top priority. Five foreign companies have been competing to win the coveted fighter plane contract, among them U.S.-based Lockheed-Martin, maker of the F-16.

GM-oh!: Genetically Modified Crops Breed with Wild Plants

Despite years of denial by biotech companies that genetically modified (GM) crops crossbred with non-GM ones, a report published by the UK's Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs on Dec 24 reveals that GM oil seed rape (canola) crossbred with conventional rape crops, as well as with weeds. The UK Independent called the results "devastating," noting that the six-year government study was to determine whether GM crops should be grown commercially in Britain.



ZAPATISTAS MARK Jan. 1 Shows They Stand

BY RAMOR X

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, MEXICO—Midnight, January 1, 2003, the sky is thick with pungent smoke and the old colonial streets are jam-packed with 20,000 spirited Zapatistas. They've taken control of San Cristobal, which is deserted of locals and security forces. The masked militants of the EZLN have journeyed from all over Chiapas and lit huge bonfires around the central plaza and surrounding streets.

From the stage, Commandante Bruce Lee commanded the cadre to build bigger fires to warm the cool night air. "This struggle has hardly begun. Let the fires shine bright so that the people can see how we have maintained our rebellion!"

The feisty rebels demonstrated that on the ninth anniversary of the uprising, they are still organized, still militant and still enraged. As Chiapas faces an uncertain future, the insurgents made it clear that the conflict has entered a new phase.

A Night To Remember

I am very proud we have peace in Mexico, with Marcos, with the Zapatistas.
—Mexican President Vincente Fox

"Fox says we have peace in Chiapas, that there is no conflict," Comandante David asked a crowd from the podium.

"Is the conflict settled in Chiapas?"

"NOOOO!" came the emphatic reply from the multitude, banging their machetes and sticks, and holding up burning torches. The mood was combative and the chants, banners and speeches from the stage were uncompromising: Fox is the same as his predecessor, Ernesto Zedillo, Fox's party PAN equals the corrupt and repressive PRI. No Evictions From Montes Azules, Globalize Rebellion And Dignity.

The rebellion in Argentina was lauded, and terrorism of Bush and Bin Laden condemned. "Are we here to surrender?" shouted Comandante Tacho. The crowd responded with such a hell-raising clamor that a woman next to me muttered, "Oh Lord, I think they're going to burn down the town."

Betrayal and Oblivion

This is the first public mobilization of the Zapatista Command and rank-and-file in almost two years. The last Zapatista

event was the hugely popular caravan to the capital in February of 2001. Sub-Commandante Marcos and the EZLN command journeyed up to Mexico City, bringing out hundreds of thousands in support of indigenous demands.

The crowning achievement of that odyssey was the presentation to Mexico's Congress of a proposed law granting a form of autonomy to indigenous peoples. But as soon as the Zapatistas returned to Chiapas, government legislators passed a watered down version of the law, and the Supreme Court rejected appeals to reinstate the original law.

The rejection of autonomy effectively negated the San Andres Accords, signed between the government and rebels in 1996. The EZLN says recognition of the accords is necessary to restart the stalled dialogue. With the failure of the autonomy law, it seemed the legal and political means to resolve the Chiapas conflict had been exhausted.

The Zapatistas seemed exhausted too, and lapsed into a piercing silence lasting 20 months. Fox worked hard to provoke divisions within the base communities. The army remained in position around the Zapatista areas, and paramilitaries upped the ante, murdering four Zapatista leaders in August, 2002.

The EZLN did not respond to these provocations, prompting rumors of impotence and turmoil. One rumor claimed Marcos had fallen out with the Clandestine Committee and had been sent into exile. Rank and file were deserting, went another. Fox, ever the opportunist, claimed the conflict had been resolved. "We have brought peace to Chiapas," he boasted.

Uncertain Future

Chiapas is on the brink of profound structural change. A series of mega-projects called Plan Puebla Panama (PPP) envisages a series of colossal dams, super highways and vast sweatshop areas across southern Mexico and Central America. The PPP, says Fox, "is a thousand times more important than any indigenous Zapatista community."

PPP has three goals:

- Increase the transit and industrial infrastructure of the region, improving the capacity for export industries.

- Catalyze a shift of the region's economy from agriculture to low-wage manu-

facturing.

- Expand private control over the vast natural resources in the region.

The process is already underway. The first sweatshop has opened in Huitzila in Chiapas. Road construction is booming. Land ownership is changing. Currently, 11 percent of land in Chiapas is held communally in "ejidos," and most are in the Lacandon jungle, controlled by Zapatista communities. A government program offers incentives to divide the land among individuals. Once privatized, the land can be sold, speeding the process of capitalist accumulation.

Influenced by the Zapatistas, small farmers across southern Mexico and Central America are forming international coalitions and coordinating protests. A masked protester from the Regional Coordination of Civil Society, blocking a highway in Chiapas last October 12 (Columbus Day) during the Day of Action against the PPP and capitalist globalization, articulated their demands, linking them with those of the Zapatistas.

"All Fox and Salazar [State Governor of Chiapas] have done is for the benefit of the rich and in favor of the owners of money... with little benefit for us, the farmers. We are against the PPP and NAFTA...and as you can see from the banners, in favor of honoring the San Andres Accords."

About a quarter of Mexico's population, 25 million, live off the land, 80 percent of them in extreme poverty. Approximately 600 campesinos are forced to abandon the land for the cities every single day. Farming is in severe decline, and NAFTA is one of the chief reasons. The influx of cheap corn and wheat from the giant commercial farms in the United States is driving small farmers to ruin.

The Fox government, firmly committed to NAFTA and the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, encourages the exodus. Official figures record 150,000 migrants from Chiapas to the U.S. each year, but in the last three years, the establishment of 80 new bus companies shuttling to the U.S. border suggests an even greater number. Combined with migration to work in Cancun resorts and the oil fields of Tabasco, a whole way of indigenous life and culture is in danger of disappearing.

"The PPP will respect the territorial integrity of the communities and promote a sustainable development," says Fox, flying



NEW YEAR'S DAY IN SAN CRISTOBAL, CHIAPAS

NINTH YEAR OF STRUGGLE Poised to Enter New Phase

in the face of the events on the ground.

Thirty indigenous communities on Montes Azules in the Lacandon Jungle are currently facing violent eviction.

"This traitorous government and the voracious capitalists know that this land [is] ours, and we won't abandon it," says Rosa, a fiery Zapatista. "Its wealth belongs to those who have lived here and worked these lands for centuries. We resist their globalization in the same way the indigenous people resisted the Conquest, and our corn will resist their transgenic corn!"

The Ninth Anniversary

The nine years of struggle of the Zapatistas has opened up vast swathes of land taken from plantation owners. Thousands of campesinos occupy and work these territories, a de facto rebel zone under the authority of 38 Autonomous Municipalities. This is the one great achievement of Zapatista communities. On the other hand, the autonomous zones are under constant threat, surrounded by the army and menaced by paramilitaries.

Government attempts to buy off rebel villages has had some success. Traditional pre-1994 Zapatista strongholds are often the focus for persistent counter-insurgency programs that have had some effect. "But we are united here," says Don Anselmo of the Zapatista village, Diez de Abril. "Although I do worry about some of the other communities," referring to the handful of surrounding smaller villages that have dropped out of the struggle.

Ex-Zapatista Esteban explains why he left Diez de Abril to live in a non-Zapatista village. "I got tired and I needed to feed my kids. The [Zapatista] organization takes up a lot of time and you get little in return." Taking advantage of a government scheme, he received some construction materials and his children receive state schooling. Is he finished with the Zapatistas? "No," says Esteban, "I'm taking a rest."

And this is the importance of the Jan. 1 rally. As the constitutional path seems exhausted and the enemy takes a more global face, the Zapatistas appear to be renewing the spirit of resistance and contemplating new strategies.

STARBUCKS: GREENWASHING DIRTY COFFEE

BY SARAH PROESCHER

Across America coffee drinkers are being duped into believing that their consumer choice is a real alternative to exploitative coffee production. Industry leader Starbucks has relentlessly promoted itself as a socially responsible corporation, with a considerable payoff for itself. The reality of coffee farming across Chiapas is cleverly disguised by touting the minuscule effort made to improve the vastly imbalanced relationship between campesino producer and global purchaser. With the help of Conservation International, corporations can now cash in on the concerns of consumers while maintaining their contracting and purchasing practices.

In the case of Chiapas, Starbucks asks "How can you help preserve the world's biodiversity simply by drinking a cup of shade-grown coffee?" The answer, of course, is to head immediately to your local Starbucks, order a cup of "Shade Grown Mexico" and "discover the connections among coffee, cloud forest and the magnificent jaguar." Starbucks hopes that while their loyal patrons are busy connecting with jungle wildlife, they will make no such connections between the \$2.25 per pound the average campesino producer in Chiapas makes and the billions of dollars the company brings in every year.

With the CI alliance, Starbucks CEO Orin Smith almost seems credible when he claims that Starbucks and CI have made a difference in farmers' lives with the sale of this exceptional coffee... by paying a premium price for this shade-grown coffee, Starbucks improves the well-being of coffee farmers and encourages them to preserve the forest environment."

While Starbucks advertises their organic coffee initiative in El Triunfo Biosphere in Chiapas, the slight progress pales in light of the enormity of the region's economic desperation. The manipulation of public opinion obscures the fact that the purchasing practices of companies such as

Starbucks are the root cause of the economic suffering of campesinos.

On Whose Good Grounds?

Starbucks' adventures with organic coffee in Chiapas, which it calls "On Good Grounds," are indeed a step in the right direction, however the reality is that such efforts taken by Starbucks compared to their overall production and profitability margin still only amount to a mere drop in the larger coffee pot. In 2001, Starbucks says it purchased 1 million pounds of "fair trade" coffee, which costs \$1.26 a pound. Yet this amounted to less than one percent of its total purchases that year.

Saving the Images of Corporations Worldwide

Corporations are turning to Conservation International, eager for a magical makeover. The GAP and Nike can change overnight from corporations steeped in unsavory sweatshop labor scandals to sensitive multicultural companies providing a common look and 'tude to a new global society unified in style.

Years ago it would have been unthinkable to imagine Exxon and Ford as champions of the environment, but today, with the help of CI, they do it with a dangerously straight face. Similarly, Starbucks, like a phoenix rising from its dirty coffee grounds, can also transform its image as profit-hungry coffee monopoly to fair trade evangelist, all for the modest initial charge of \$650,000 paid in full to CI.

Founded in 1987 as a green organization focusing on protecting biologically rich "hotspots," Conservation International teamed up with the private sector to promote corporate participation in social and environmental causes. "Greenwashing" campaigns ensued as a result of this convenient partnership.

For example, Ford call itself "one of CI's most powerful allies in the effort to protect the diversity of life on Earth,"

though one need not investigate too deeply into Ford's corporate track record to be convinced of the contrary. With the authority of CI's position as a well-known environmental organization protecting them, participating businesses can turn their own shade of green with relative ease while spending only a mere fraction of their earnings.

With all the lip service given to social, civic and environmental commitments, corporations still have a hard time hiding the fundamental logic that drives their actions and priorities. As so eloquently summarized by Nike, at the end of the day, it's just business as usual.

"Nike often makes decisions that are not the most popular or politically correct view. But our decisions are always thoughtful, and are based on trying to do what we feel is the right thing for our consumers and our business."

Like Nike, Starbucks upholds the time-honored mantra of most big businesses operating in today's global economy: profit, by any means necessary.

Starbucks Laughs Last

OXFAM reports that international coffee prices have now reached a 30-year low, having decreased by more than 50 percent in the last three years. For the 20 million coffee farmers worldwide, the scenario is quickly becoming more and more grim. Coffee buyers show no signs of drastically changing their purchasing practices and farmers grow increasingly more dependent on the exploitative relationship. The result is malnutrition and health problems as coffee planting is prioritized over food crops that could be used for local consumption.

Despite the tragic plummet of coffee prices due to overproduction, corporations like Nestle and Starbucks saw their profits skyrocket. Though fair trade alternatives can indeed offer needed outlets to desperate farmers, the big coffee companies will not cooperate without a public struggle.

REALITY CZECH: CAPITALISM BRINGS BOTH POVERTY AND GLITTER TO PRAGUE

BY SANJAY KUMAR

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC—Santa Claus came to Prague's Old Town Square this past December. He didn't arrive on a sleigh, but on a tractor-trailer with a little help from the folks at Coca-Cola. The flatbed scene was vintage Norman Rockwell: faux fireplace, an easy chair to hold Santa as he dispensed goodies, stockings on the mantle, and a picture window to nowhere with the requisite winter wonderland scene. Everything was branded with the Coke symbol—signs, games, Santa's helpers, and, of course, the gifts.

There was only one problem: the jolly old elf isn't part of the Czech Christmas pantheon—baby Jesus hands out the loot instead. I watched with a Czech friend who fumed, "This isn't part of our tradition. We don't hang stockings on the mantle. And no one has a living room like that."

The episode took place on St. Nicholas' Day, December 5, when the saint wanders about with an angel and devil in tow, interrogating children about their behavior. The angel gives nice children a small gift, while the devil dispenses coal to the naughty ones. Unlike the fat man in the red suit, Saint Nicholas looks the part, with mitre, robes and staff.

Santa is making his presence known, nonetheless, appearing on Czech television, clothing and advertising. In response, some Czechs grumble that their country is threatened by yet another invader: one-world culture. They have the latest Hollywood movies, internet cafes, Scientologists, skateboard punks, Frank Gehry architecture, stylish couples walking down the street talking on separate cell phones and, of course, McDonald's (more than 60 of them). Prague itself is another cobblestone backdrop for movie sets and sports car commercials. Cranes sprout among the gothic spires, pulling up commercial and residential towers, hotels and "hypermarkets" that would look at home in any American exurb.

Czechs also sense a threat from the one-world economy. On a clammy December day, nearly 10,000 descended on Prague to protest. Thousands of farmers assaulted the Agriculture Ministry, with eggs, apples, corn and manure. They were upset that when the Czech Republic and nine other countries join the European Union in May 2004, new members will receive only 25 percent of the agricultural subsidies given to farmers in current member states. Blue-collar workers also showed up to vent their grievances. One demonstrator, a 56-year-old meat cutter, said he's been working for 40 years. He asked, "How much do you think I make an hour?" About \$1.50 he answered, meaning he earned just half of the per capita income of \$6,000.

"A lot of older people see that capitalism did not bring any solution, that their lives are getting worse," says Fabiano Golgo, editor of the muckraking weekly,

Novy Prostor. "Their pensions are not keeping pace with inflation," which has averaged 5 percent annually since 1997. Pensions are a bedrock of support for about 25 percent of the 10.4 million Czechs, and account for 95 percent of the income in pensioner households. Minimum payments are about 6,000 crowns a month, a little less than \$200. Combined with other benefits of an activist government—a national health-care system, functioning public transport and a high rate of home ownership—a pension can provide a bearable standard of living.

The government has been able to buy the peace with a robust welfare state. However, there is a sense that the social fabric is unravelling. Ten percent of the workforce is on the dole, and four percent are long-term unemployed. Drug use has skyrocketed. The government estimates there are about 30,000 IV drug users. One Prague resident describes the parks beneath the Prague Castle as being "carpeted with heroin addicts in the summertime." Prostitution is all but legal, earning Prague the title "Central Europe's Bangkok."

It would be unfair to say that this is the legacy of President Vaclav Havel, who is stepping down after 13 almost-uninterrupted years in the post. After the Velvet Revolution ousted the four-decade-old Communist regime, there was revived talk of "socialism with a human face." But, as a country of 10 million, the Czech Republic had few choices but to turn westward.

The solution didn't have to be the mass privatization that ensued, says Milos, a pensioner who used to work in the state-run media. "It could have gone different ways after 1989." He favored "nationalization of the industries, public works, everything, even the petrol stations." A Social Democrat, Milos adds that there's little difference between the ruling Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD) and their conservative rivals, the Civic Democrats.

The CSSD talks a good game. Labor and Social Affairs Minister Zdenek Skromach says the Czech Republic should be a place where "an individual doesn't have to be afraid if he gets into a difficult situation." The CSSD's commitment to social welfare is questionable, though. It has proposed that pensions become a pay-as-you-go system, ending minimum payments. It also suggested that the five percent tax on property sales—used to subsidize the purchase of homes by first-time buyers—be eliminated and replaced with government giveaways to developers. And the labor minister, borrowing a page from Tony Blair's "Third Way," wants to end unemployment benefits for jobless graduates and create a welfare-to-work program.

Both parties are also tainted by corruption, which is rampant in the Czech Republic. Fabiano Golgo says when the CSSD or the Civic Democrats are in power, "It's about administering the country and taking what you can." Prague Mayor Jan Kasl of the Civic Democrats

resigned last May, citing pervasive corruption. He charged that the public's dealings with government officials usually had to be eased with bribes. Havel has labelled it "mafia capitalism," earning the enmity of both parties. Most blatant is the looting of state-run industries. Politicians sell them on the cheap to multinationals in return for a payoff.

One Czech government study notes that since 1998, barely one-fifth of 6,853 public projects have had the required open bids. In June, for example, the government signed a backroom deal with Housing and Construction, Israel's largest construction firm, to build an 80-kilometer-long highway in Northern Moravia. Jiri Petrak, a consultant whose firm worked with the government on the project, told *The Prague Post*, "We were under enormous pressure to agree [to] any terms offered by Housing and Construction." Petrak said the 30-year contract could end up costing \$7 billion, while the government could build and manage the highway for one-quarter of the cost. Golgo claims one Czech official involved in the deal was rewarded with a beachfront residence in Tel Aviv.

Big business has taken to the Czech Republic because of its well-educated, low-cost workforce and central location between East and West Europe. Foreign money is buying up the choicest assets. Just three countries—the Netherlands, Austria and Germany—account for over 70 percent of the investments.

Czechs are paying the price to enter the global marketplace, however. For example, Dutch telecommunications firm TDC and Deutsche Bank purchased 51 percent of Czech Telecom for a steal—just ten times its 2001 earnings of \$200 million. Already, according to the Czech daily Economic News, the new owners plan to lay off 2,000 workers. Adding insult to injury, the purchasers have put the deal on hold, reportedly hoping to drive the price down even further.

The beneficiary of much of the discontent is the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), which is regularly polling around 20 percent. The average Communist Party voter is not a bitter pensioner or ex-civil servant, but a worker over 40 who feels left in the lurch. The Communists are the only ones talking about rising unemployment, a potential economic crisis stemming from a rising trade deficit and inflation,

and cuts in social spending demanded by the IMF and EU. They are also the only major party critical of the decision to join NATO and the looming possibility of a war with Iraq.

That's not to say there's nostalgia for the Communist era. "There was nothing in the stores. No garlic, no onions, no meat," recalls Roman, a 79-year-old mathematical theorist. "You couldn't travel. Everyone was the same, but we had little."

While Czechs are better off than most of their Eastern European cousins, their future is uncertain at best. The crown has appreciated substantially in the last two years, and many businesses say labor costs are getting expensive. It's all relative, of course. Volkswagen, which owns Czech automaker Skoda, pays its workers one-tenth of what workers earn in Germany.

Czechs realize they are at the mercy of the market. And more and more of them may find themselves on the dust heap of history, like Jarda, who begs in the old town. He was recently hit by a car and lost his job. Fifty-six, he says he can't even get a job as a bathroom attendant. His partner's pension barely covers the rent. Jarda says, "Under Communism you were forced to work, which was bad. Now I don't have any work and that is worse. Life before 1989 was shit. Now, it's twice as much shit."

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CHIAPAS: NUEVOS DESAFÍOS

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El primero de enero marca el noveno aniversario del levantamiento zapatista, el inicio del Tratado de Libre Comercio con América del Norte y el día en que son levantadas todas las restricciones a las importaciones de productos agrícolas de Estados Unidos (una medida del TLCAN). Encima de todo, el gobierno mexicano está conduciendo los desplazamientos forzados de las comunidades indígenas en el área conocida como "Montes Azules". Como resultado, miles de zapatistas de todo Chiapas llegaron de las montañas y la selva para marchar en la ciudad de San Cristóbal de las Casas, dando fin a un período de silencio que empezó casi dos años atrás, después de la Marcha a la Ciudad de México en abril del 2001.

Extractos de las palabras de los comandantes zapatistas

“Por mi voz habla la voz del EZLN. Hermanas del campo y de la ciudad, yo les voy a decir con estas humildes palabras que hace muchos años que nosotras las mujeres venimos sufriendo la discriminación, la explotación y el olvido por los malos gobiernos. Igualmente nos pasan en nuestras casas pero también nosotros lo administramos y sabemos como vivimos.”

...“Hermanas yo también quiero invitar a las mujeres a hacer un llamado que se organicen para que juntas nosotras podamos defender nuestro derecho y también nosotras tengamos igualdad.”

Comandante Fidelia

...“Vamos a luchar por nuestra existencia en contra del exterminio. Así vamos a seguir luchando con la palabra verdadera. Así seguiremos hasta que todos juntos logremos y conquistemos un lugar para todos en la vida de la humanidad. Por eso,

hermanos y hermanas de todo el mundo, les pedimos que mantengan su lucha y sigan luchando todo el tiempo que sea necesario. Porque nosotros los zapatistas no los vamos a traicionar a todos los luchadores políticos y sociales de todo el mundo y para luchar en el mundo no pediremos permiso a nadie, mucho menos aceptar que los gobiernos nos digan lo que debemos hacer o qué es lo que vamos a decir. Pero es un hecho que apoyamos a todos los luchadores sociales y políticos de todo el mundo porque tenemos esperanza en todas las luchas del mundo. Vamos a ganar porque nuestras demandas son justas.”

Comandante Mister

“Aunque nos estén matando, otros van naciendo. Pero dejarse engañar, eso no. Por lo tanto estamos aquí con nuestras bases la pequeña parte de nuestros pueblos en resistencia para demostrar y desmentir todo lo que han dicho los mentirosos de todo México y el mundo. Jóvenes, ya no se dejen engañar más. Ya nos han engañado muchísimos años. ¿Qué esperanza vas a tener con los partidos si solo te aprovechan que votes por ellos y después te persiguen, te roban, te matan, te encarcelan o te amenazan a tu familia y solo por bailar o cantar como tuquieres o por cortarte el pelo o vestirte como te gusta, solo por eso te sospechan o te acusan que eres terrorista o criminal. No te respetan tu costumbre ni tu cultura.”

Comandante Omar

“Ya es tiempo que todos nos organicemos y que formemos nuestros municipios autónomos. No hay que esperar hasta cuando el mal gobierno dé permiso. Debemos organizarnos como verdaderamente rebeldes y no esperar que alguien nos de permiso para ser autónomos, sin ley o con ley. De manera que así debemos fun-



Adriana Estrada Alvarez

cionar nuestras autoridades en rebeldía y así poder autogobernarnos. Sólo así puede funcionar verdaderamente la democracia al interior de un municipio.”

Comandante Bruce Lee

“Compañeros y compañeras, desde el 1 de Enero del 1994, prendimos una pequeña lumbre de rebeldía y de dignidad, y esta lumbre la han querido apagar los poderosos. Pero no han podido y nadie la podrá apagar, porque es la luz de la esperanza para los pueblos indios y no indios de México y del mundo.

Esa luz simboliza hoy nuestra fuerza y nuestra protección en esta larga lucha por democracia, libertad y justicia. Por eso hoy esa luz hagamosla grande y fuerte para que los pueblos y las naciones vean que la mantenemos viva esa luz de la rebeldía zapatista.”

Comandante David

Para leer la transcripción completa de los discursos ver Chiapas.indymedia.org

LUNA DE MIEL EN LA TRIPLE FRONTERA

Viene de la página 24.

tres de la Triple Frontera. Por su parte, el ex presidente Menem ha acusado a residentes de la Triple Frontera por los atentados contra instituciones israelíes que ocurrieron durante su mandato. Pero diversos sectores, incluidos dirigentes de la comunidad judía argentina, declararon que Menem está buscando chivos expiatorios y que su gobierno corrupto no hizo nada para esclarecer los crímenes de más de 100 personas (Embajada de Israel (1992) y AMIA (1994).

Iniciativa argentina

El 16 de diciembre de 2002, se reunieron en Buenos Aires funcionarios de inteligencia de EE.UU., Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay. La reunión se hizo por invitación de la cancillería argentina con el fin de intercambiar información y estudiar los puntos vulnerables en la Triple Frontera. Algunos comentaristas opinaron que esta iniciativa de Argentina ponía de manifiesto una continuidad de la política de subordinación a Washington en un

momento clave para la renegociación de la deuda externa con el FMI (Fondo Monetario Internacional).

Otros vieron que era un gesto amistoso hacia Brasil y Paraguay, que son los más perjudicados por la campaña contra la Triple Frontera, que ha devastado a la industria turística y al comercio de la región.

En la reunión de Buenos Aires se analizó el terrorismo y sus fuentes de financiamiento, el narcotráfico, el lavado de dinero, controles aduaneros y migratorios y el tráfico de armas en la región. Luego la delegación se trasladó a la Triple Frontera.

Cofer Black, Coordinador de Antiterrorismo del Departamento de Estado y jefe de la delegación estadounidense, se pasaba por las pasarelas admirando el espectáculo maravilloso de las Cataratas del Iguazú. Un periodista le preguntó qué pensaba y Black respondió: “Que le recomendaría a mi hijo que cuando se case, venga a pasar su luna de miel aquí.”

De atracción turística a “nido de terroristas”

Paradójico que el mismo jefe de la delegación estadounidense para la lucha antiterrorista en la Triple Frontera tenga dificultades para seguir el discurso oficial que rotula a la zona como nido de terroristas. Si bien la Triple Frontera estuvo asociada a actividades de contrabando y otros ilícitos desde hace tiempo, fue en noviembre de 2001, cuando se encontró un mapa de la región en una “casa de seguridad” de Al-Qaeda en Kabul, Afganistán, que la Triple Frontera cambió de estatus. Gracias a este cambio

ahora frecuentemente se la menciona en la misma frase con Irak, Irán, Sudán y Corea del Norte. Parece excesivo cuando la única prueba mencionada a la BBC por el comisario paraguayo Carlos Altenburger es una carta de agraciado enviada por individuos relacionados a Hezbollah

a comerciantes libaneses de la región. Deberíamos preguntarnos cuántas cartas similares fueron dirigidas por la mismísima Al-Qaeda a miembros de la familia real saudita, por ejemplo, sin que haya cambiado el estatus de Arabia Saudita, de aliado de Estados Unidos a guarida de terroristas.

El editorial de un diario local de Foz de Iguazú desafió a los investigadores de EE.UU. que están en la Triple Frontera, que hagan bien su trabajo, que “investiguen bien; pero las comunidades les agradeceremos que, si no encuentran nada, nos den un certificado de inocencia definitiva”.

Si quieras colaborar en EL INDEPENDIENTE (escribir artículos, corregir pruebas, traducir, etc.), envía un email a: imc-nyc-espanol@lists.indymedia.org o asiste a una de nuestras reuniones en IMC (34 E 29th St, piso 2) los martes a las 7.

EL INDEPENDIENTE



ÉSTA NO ES NUESTRA GUERRA

DANIEL VILA

En octubre del 2001 Estados Unidos lanzó un brutal ataque militar por aire y tierra contra la empobrecida nación de Afganistán, el cual ha resultado en la muerte de más de 5,000 personas, la mayoría civiles. Voceros de EE.UU. han declarado que con esa acción han iniciado una guerra a nivel global en contra de lo que ellos definen como "el terrorismo mundial" y que es posible que la misma tenga una duración de 10, 15 o hasta 20 años. El gobierno ha utilizado como excusa para esta guerra los ataques a las Torres Gemelas en Nueva York y al Pentágono en Washington.

En estos momentos EE.UU. se prepara para expandir esa guerra contra el pueblo de Irak, a pesar de que hasta ahora no se ha presentado evidencia de que Irak, Afganistán o cualquier otro país haya tenido vínculo alguno con los actos del 11 de septiembre. El pueblo trabajador estadounidense, y en particular los latinos, seamos o no ciudadanos, no debemos tomar parte ni respaldar esta guerra porque es injusta y porque serán los pobres quienes serán llamados a pelear en ella. El verdadero propósito de esta ofensiva militar es facilitar que las grandes corporaciones de EE.UU. se apoderen de los recursos naturales y los mercados en los países en proceso de desarrollo. Las empresas

petroleras llevan décadas manipulando golpes de estado y sobornando a los gobiernos del Medio Oriente con el propósito de asegurar que el petróleo de esa región quede bajo su control. Por otro lado, la economía de este país se encuentra en una crisis provocada por la sobreproducción de bienes para los cuales no

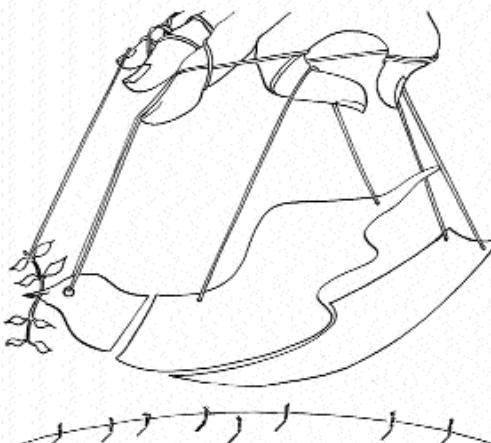
tos de Asia, África y América Latina. Los latinos de este país jugaremos un rol importante al momento de decidir el éxito o fracaso de este plan de dominio mundial por las grandes multinacionales de EE.UU. Estas son las mismas que saquean a nuestros países al apoderarse de las empresas antes públicas como las tele-

enfrentamos con una sociedad que nos rechaza y que no comprende que sus empresas, al apoderarse de nuestras economías, son la causante de nuestro exodo. Aquí somos superexploitados en el trabajo y al alquilar vivienda. La mayoría no contamos con seguro de salud y a diario corremos el riesgo de ser arrestados por policías racistas. El estado se ha aprovechado de los ataques del 11 de septiembre para montar una cacería de brujas contra todos los inmigrantes y en particular los latinos. Miles de latinos han sido deportados desde el 11 de septiembre y miles se encuentran en las cárceles del Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización.

Históricamente, los latinos y los negros han muerto en números desproporcionadamente altos en las guerras de EEUU. En la Primera y Segunda Guerra Mundial, en Korea y en Vietnam, los latinos eran enviados a las misiones más peligrosas. Recientemente hemos escuchado a jóvenes latinos que no tienen sus papeles en orden expresar su intención de ingresar al ejército

con el propósito de obtener la ciudadanía. No debemos permitir que otra generación sacrifique sus vidas.

Daniel Vila es un activista de la organización New York Labor Against the War (Trabajadores de Nueva York contra la guerra).



Alfredo Garzón

encuentran compradores. La clase dominante de EE.UU. ha concluido que para aliviar esta crisis es imprescindible expandir sus mercados y esto se logrará conquistando y apoderándose de todos los canales de venta y distribución de produc-

tónicas, generadoras de electricidad y los hospitales. Al privatizarlas han eliminado millones de empleos lo cual ha provocado una salida masiva de nuestros compatriotas hacia EE.UU. en busca de empleo y una vida mejor. Al llegar a esta nación nos

simpatizantes en la Triple Frontera y recibe apoyo financiero de algunos residentes.

A pesar de las coincidencias, hay matices. La posición oficial argentina es la más cercana a Washington. El presidente Duhalde ha ido de los dichos a los hechos. Su gobierno permitió el ingreso de fuerzas especiales estadounidenses en la provincia de Salta, en octubre de 2002, para que realicen maniobras militares, sin autorización del Congreso y ocultándolo a la opinión pública. Las maniobras militares continuarán en abril de 2003, cuando llegue una delegación de boinas verdes a la provincia de Misiones, a pocos kilóme-

Sigue en la página 24.

LUNA DE MIEL EN LA TRIPLE FRONTERA

SILVIA ARANA

El gobierno de Estados Unidos ha decretado que la Triple Frontera es un nido de terroristas. El área está formada por tres ciudades: Foz de Iguazú (Brasil), Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) y Ciudad del Este (Paraguay). En esta zona de gran actividad comercial están las Cataratas del Iguazú, las más altas del continente americano. Viven cientos de miles de inmigrantes de origen libanés, egipcio, chino, coreano y croata.

En diciembre de 2001 Francis X. Taylor, el entonces Coordinador de Antiterrorismo del Departamento de

Estado, declaró en Asunción del Paraguay: "Organizaciones extremistas del Islam, como Hezbollah, Hamas y al Gamaat al Islamyia, utilizan esta zona pujante como base de apoyo del terrorismo." Dijo que se fundamentaba en información compartida por las fuerzas del orden y oficiales de inteligencia de los gobiernos involucrados, pero no proporcionó pruebas.

Posteriormente, frecuentes reportes de CNN y otros medios, citando fuentes de inteligencia de la administración Bush, incluyeron a Al-Qaeda entre las organizaciones que operaban en la Triple Frontera. El diario The Washington Times (muy bien relacionado

con el Pentágono como con la secta Moon) reportó sobre los planes de la administración Bush de establecer un comando militar en la Triple Frontera. El New York Times, por su parte, publicó que pobladores de la Triple Frontera han contribuido con más de \$50 millones de dólares al terrorismo islámico.

¿Cuál es la posición de Brasil, Paraguay y Argentina?

La posición de los gobiernos de los tres países es que no hay evidencia de que operativos de Al-Qaeda u otros grupos extremistas islámicos estén en la región. Pero coinciden en que Hezbollah, organización islámica basada en el Líbano, tiene